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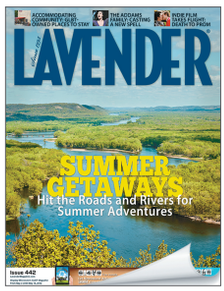
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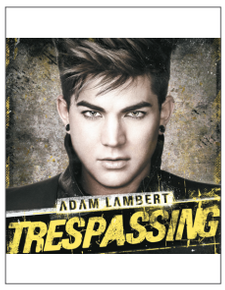

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Prizes




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### CORRECTION

Bingo A Go Go's "Wedding Bell Bingo" was erroneously listed as being on May 15 in our last issue. We apologize, the event is May 5. www.bingoagogo.com

### ON THE COVER

A fraction of the view from the private bluff at American Eagle Bluff Bed & Breakfast in Read's Landing, Minnesota Photo by Andy Lien




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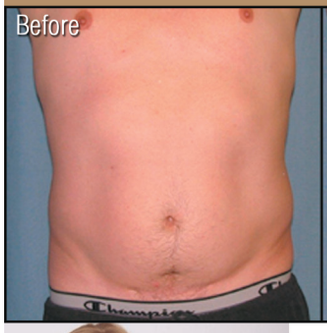
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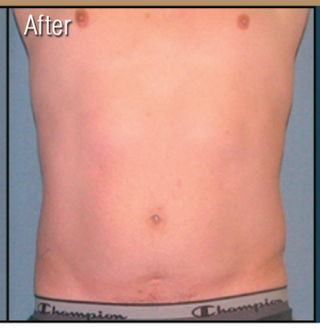


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# Getaway: Chicago in a Day

I'VE FALLEN in love with the photography of the newly discovered Vivian Maier. She snapped as she walked. She caught life. She was an undiscovered genius of The Moment. I stumbled upon a link to her first exhibition ever, taking place at the Chicago Cultural Center until the first weekend in April last year. First, I posted a link to her exhibit on Facebook. Then, I posted that I wanted to go to it. Impulsive? A little. Doable? Definitely. Then, Heidi C. said she'd go. That was the tipping point. It was on. Heidi H. and Amanda B. quickly volunteered and suddenly we had a road trip.

We also had parameters. One day, to and from. With vehicle. Before the end of the exhibit's run in April. On a budget.

We also had a little bit of feedback. From "that's crazy" to "impressive." I smiled at the challenge. I love this stuff.

It's funny; some people got a little uncomfortable at thought of an 800-mile road trip in one day. For an exhibit. In Chicago. From Minneapolis-St. Paul. That it's not only illogical and frivolous, but–because of that–it's not a good idea. Not true. No, it made no real sense, but that's not necessarily a good reason not to do it. I considered taking offense to it, but no…people who found it uncomfortable probably did so because of their own feelings of being a bit threatened by it; the freedom, the impulsiveness, the lack of purpose…but abundance of whimsy. I noodled with it. I smiled at it. I wanted to do it even more.

I love proving to people that fun is allowed. The frivolous is still accessible, even in these arguably austere times. And, with four of us footing the bill, the whirlwind trip wouldn't be a waste of anything–let alone our time or resources.

So there.

Then, you have the camp of folks who can't fathom going to Chicago without much of a plan or guide. I found that aspect terribly appealing. I think it's become my life goal to overcome the idea that–though I have no sense of compass direction–I can navigate the heck out of a trip. That–though I grew up in corn and soybean fields–I've got no problem "driving Chicago." That–though we live in an era of Tom Tom, LoJack City, Magellan, and dashboard GPS consoles that dull our abilities to read maps (and will probably somehow lead to the downfall of humanity)–I can envision a route and make it all happen without anything that requires a cord that plugs into the cigarette lighter. That–though I'm a woman–I won't be overwhelmed by these manly things as I drive my diet SUV around a big city. Sure, it's the unknown…but it's my unknown.

It's a *calculated unknown*.

What you've got to understand is that the idea becomes much less overwhelming when limits are in place. 3-4 hours in Chicago with an exhibit as the goal gave us a location; a place we needed to park the vehicle. And, a window of time. Then, working out from there, I knew the Bean was close by as were the museums, planetarium, and aquarium (and Soldier Field). A trip in on the "L" wasn't in the cards;






finding our other Chicago go-to destinations weren't for this trip, and a sit-down restaurant probably wouldn't do the trick. But, we could improvise here and there and do just fine.

And we did.

The people who responded to my post were strangers to ↦

Continued on page 49

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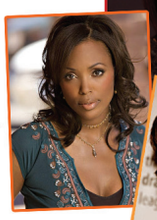
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# Pronouncements from the Pale Blue Dot

PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS pronouncing that they know God's intentions, and know them directly from the source, since He also gave them His one True religion. They know firsthand that God prohibits same-sex marriage and know for a certainly He has no truck with uppity Catholic nuns who help "certain people."

These people came to mind as I was reading about Voyager One and Two in the latest *Smithsonian* magazine. Launched by NASA in 1977, they have been sailing out ever since, covering billions of miles as we back on Terra eat, sleep, and fuss over whether or not a law student who asks about birth control is a whore.

The Voyagers had their own tasks but Carl Sagan, astronomer and author, repeatedly petitioned for a shot of Earth from "out there." For fear of blinding the camera when it turned towards our Sun, the project was delayed until the craft was 3.7 billion miles out.

Finally, on Valentine's Day 1990, Voyager One looked back over its shoulder and snapped a shot of all the planets, a frame in which Earth took up exactly one pixel. Sagan dubbed this pixel "The Pale Blue Dot."

Today, at 11 billion miles out, Voyager One's signals, travelling at the speed of light, take sixteen hours to reach Earth, and Earth, should another portrait attempt be made, would be lost in the Sun's glare, while it a bright star, just south of Rigel.

And the Voyagers have not yet entered interstellar space. When they do, notes *Smithsonian* writer Timothy Ferris, "they will encounter an environment so different from Earth's environs as to challenge our homespun notions of what it means to go someplace." Even then it will take Voyager Two 40,000 more years before it will pass within 1.7 light years from the red dwarf star Ross 248.

"Homespun" is what I hear when someone pronounces that thus and such has "always" been or that he *knows* what God wants. If I may make my own pronouncement, I believe that any maker of the infinite would have more concern for the well-being of his handiwork, of how those bits of carbon-based matter treated and cared for one another, than for outer trappings and incantations.

And the Voyagers travel on. □



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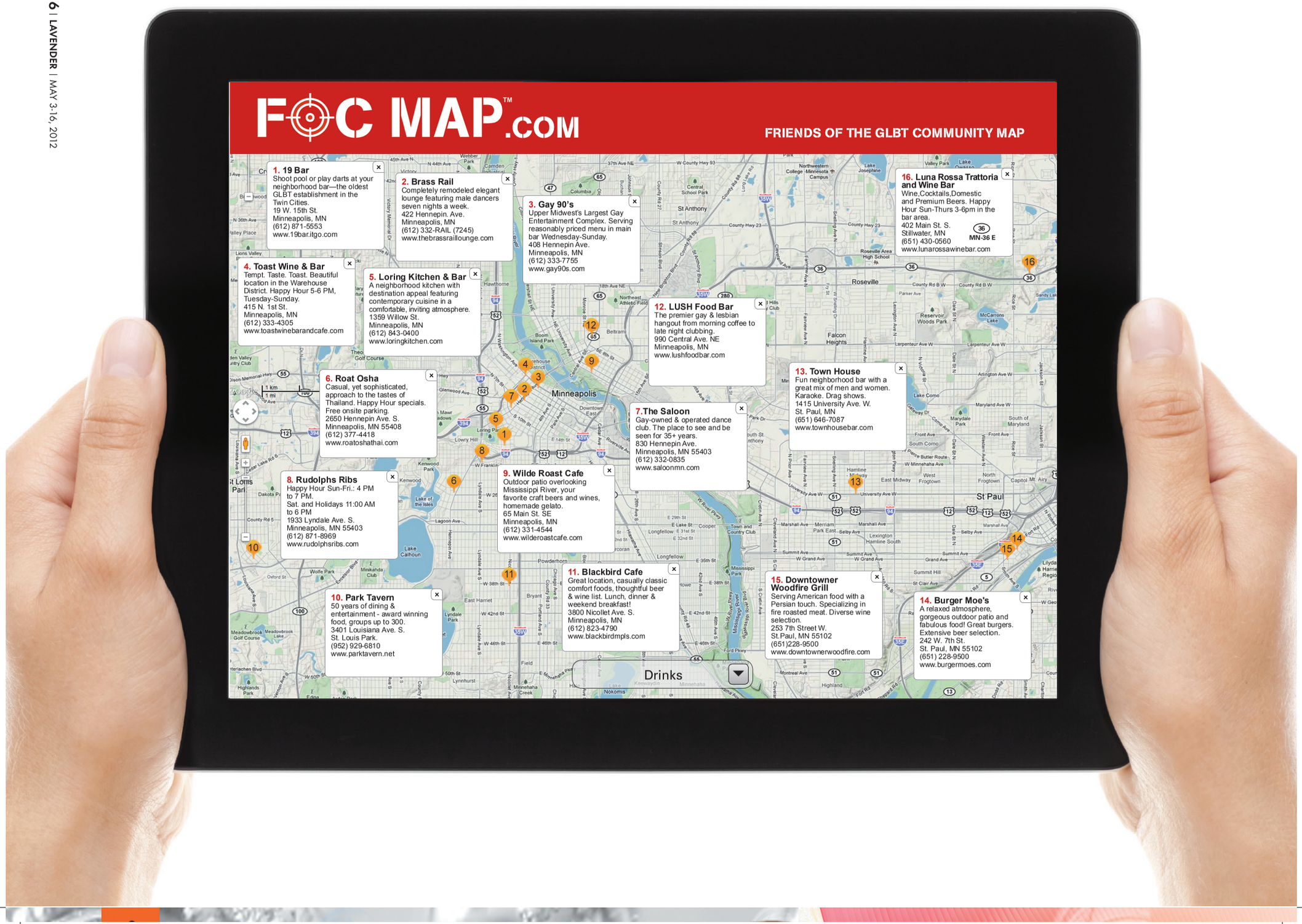
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SHOWCASE | photos by George Holdgrafer

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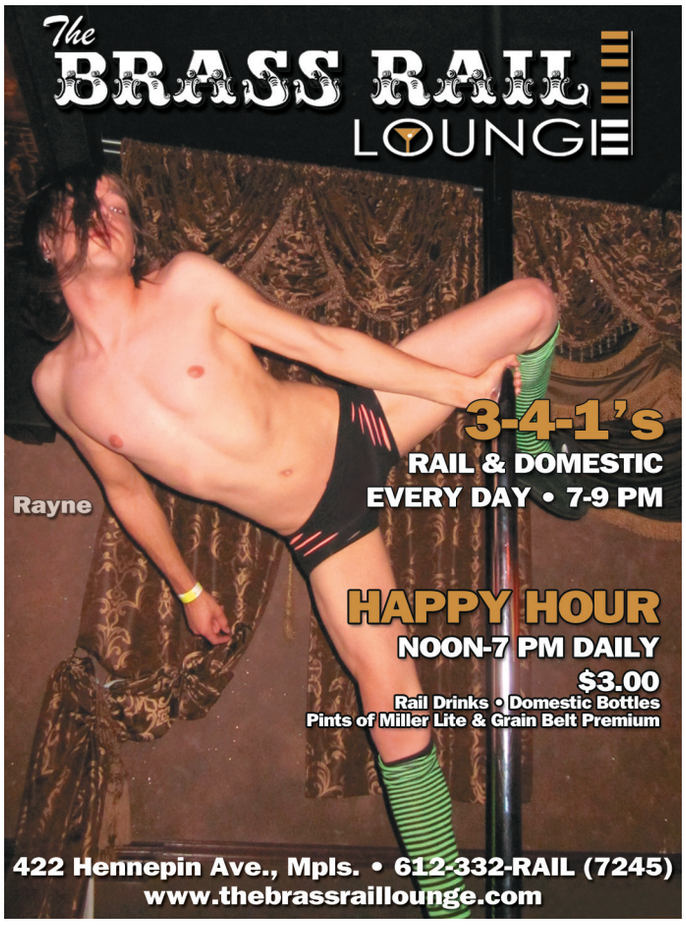





## GAY 90's APRIL 22








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ANNIVERSARY | by George Holdgrafer

# A Bar Fit for a Queen

## 19 Bar Celebrates Triple Anniversary on May 19 (Appropriately Enough!)

FEBRUARY 6 was the 60th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth II's accession to the British throne in 1952. And for the local 19 Bar—with an iconic 1960s portrait of the Queen having graced a wall for decades—it's a triple anniversary: the 60th of the venerable establishment, whose entire history coincides with the monarch's reign; the 20th of Gary Hallberg's owning the business; and the 90th of the building that houses it.

The cornerstone of the bar—whose present name derives from its address, 19 West 15th Street, Minneapolis—bears the three line inscription: "Magney & Tussler, Inc./ Architects & Engineers/1922." The firm's main claim to fame is that it was the architect of the Foshay Tower in Downtown Minneapolis, which debuted in 1929. During the Prohibition Era, the building later called the 19 reportedly was a speakeasy.

In 1952, life partners Everett Stoltz and George Koch opened a predominately gay bar there—a shrewd move, given its location in the heart of what has been a gay enclave for decades. From the 1950s on, the 19's clientele mainly was gay men from the Loring Park neighborhood. In the early days, the entrance was in the middle on the north wall on West 15th Street, and the bar was on the west wall. On shelves behind the bar, each regular patron had a barrel-shaped brown-glass mug with his or her name inscribed on the wooden handle.

For nearly four decades, the usually quiet 19 suddenly would transform into a beehive of people late Sunday night, when the old "blue law" (repealed in 1990) allowed the bar, which had only a 3.2 ("weak") beer license, to stay open until 1 AM, while the Downtown gay clubs with full beer and liquor licenses had to close at midnight.

In 1983, after several ownership changes, Ray Onstine bought the 19. Completely remodeling it, he moved the bar to the center of the room, and relocated the entrance to the east corner of the north wall. After his death, his parents, the late Bud and Charlotte Onstine, operated the business for a short time.

Hallberg purchased the 19 on May 8, 1992, and acquired the building as well in 1995. In several stages, he nearly doubled the bar's space by expanding west into what had been the adjacent Loring Cleaners. He also built a popular year-round patio out from the south wall in the back. In 2003, he obtained a license to serve full liquor and strong beer, which brought a host of new customers who wanted more than 3.2 beer.

Today, the 19 continues the friendly ambience of its 60 years as a neighborhood GLBT bar. Most times, you'll find some people engaging in a game of a pool at three state-of-the-art tables. Others simply will carry on a conversation over a reasonably priced cocktail or beer. As the bar closest to the Pride Festival in Loring Park, it's the busiest place in town Pride Weekend.

Hallberg says, "We're very proud to be the oldest GLBT bar in the Twin Cities, and one of the oldest—if not the oldest—in the country. I'm proud of having owned it for a third of its history now. We thank our countless past and present patrons for supporting us all these years. The 19 will be here to serve our community for many years in the future."

The 19 Bar is celebrating its triple anniversary on May 19 (appropriately enough!). Enjoy happy hour prices all day and all night, from opening at 1 PM to closing at 2 AM, plus free hot dogs and brats.

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The iconic portrait of Queen Elizabeth II at the 19 Bar, both of which have ruled for 60 years.



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# An Indie Film Takes Flight: Death To Prom







Photos courtesy of *Death To Prom*. To see more photos and video, go to www.LavenderMagazine.com.

AT A TIME in our history when high school pressures to conform and fit in have reached tragic consequences, a new Indie film, *Death to Prom*, makes every effort to show teenagers who are smart and positive, yet flawed. A film that enforces that being different is something to be celebrated.

Set in Minneapolis, the film is centered on Rene, a gay male, and Frankie, his best friend, who dream up high-fashion photo shoots in order to make the best of high school. Hina Khan, who plays Frankie, says "I think that it will be great to see how Rene and Frankie energize one another and push each other to be over the top in terms of creativity." Rene is a lover of fashion magazines and designing clothes, whereas Frankie's passions are her camera and punk rock. However, the drama of their fashion shoots comes to life as they end up fighting over Sasha, one of their jock classmates.

Matt Stenerson, the writer and producer, is incredibly grateful for how well received the project has been and the immense support people have shown. "People and businesses have been very supportive, a lot have offered up their homes/businesses for locations," Stenerson says. "It's awesome to have this kind of help."

The cinematographer and co-producer, Jeremy Wilker, agrees. "People seem genuinely excited by the movie and what we've created so far," Wilker says. "They love the color, the fabulous styling Matt put together, and the multi-cultural cast. Most people assume that we've already shot the movie and they are asking when the release date is!"

In fact, *Death to Prom* has yet to be filmed. A campaign has been set up on the Kickstarter website in order to raise funds for production. Stenerson says, "We didn't really have a budget for the teaser, so a lot of people worked pro-bono. Now that we're making the feature in June, we want to raise enough to pay the people who have helped us on the way."

The project is being helped along with a fiscal sponsorship with IFP Minnesota, Center for Media Arts. Wilker, a long-time member, says "we've got amazingly talented casts and crews here. They work hard at their craft and they deserve a paycheck." Laughing, Stenerson adds, "We won't be spending money on star trailers, imported bottled water, or cappuccino carts!"

Unfortunately, there has been a large increase in the amount of indie films being produced each year, so filmmakers have turn to alternative methods to finance the films. Kickstarter has proven successful for *Death to Prom.* "Camera technology is moving so rapidly and the quality has reached such high levels, that the major film festivals are receiving thousands to almost 10,000 submissions for a few hundred programming slots," Wilker says. "There is also so much 'noise' online from our social networks and media and 24-hour-a-day texts…how do you compete? How do you get attention? Obscurity is the bane of all filmmakers."

Why produce this film in Minneapolis? Meant to be a film that could take place in any city, the producers are hoping that viewers from most towns would be able to relate to the story. Stenerson expresses celebrating "how great Minneapolis is" and its great diversity. Wilker is a "firm believer that you *can* and *should* shoot feature films right here in Minnesota, especially Minnesota stories."

With a message that behind every label is an individual much more complex and featuring how differences can become strengths, the storyline of *Death to Prom* is sure to resonate with audiences. Individuality is meant to apply to everyone, from the jocks, to the punks, to the fashionistas.

"This is an important film," says Thomas Sellwood, the actor portraying Sasha. "[It is so] relevant today, that I think it's important to show people, high schoolers especially. Like, 'hey, you're not the only one, we get it, we get what you're going through.' I think everyone can relate to being an outsider, to not fitting in, to feeling like there's more to you than what other people see. And so that's what I hope to bring to Sasha – a sense that it's OK to break out of the mold that people see you in, even a sense that it's OK to fit several molds."

Following the storylines of a jock; an artsy, Middle Eastern girl; and a gay, Latino, creative type, the idea of fitting several molds has never been clearer. Khan expresses a similar interest to portray that diversity positively. "My hope is that viewers appreciate the diversity of the characters in terms of their background culturally, economically, etc., and how they see each other beyond all of the labels that we put on each other," she says. "The relationships between the characters may be over the top, and yet you can still find yourself relating to them."

The messages of the film have even been able to resonate with the cast's personal lives. Khan especially relates to her character. "My best friend growing up was reminiscent of Rene in so many ways, and we would spend hours at Barnes & Noble pouring through high-fashion magazines and art books while drinking cappuccinos. We fell in love with the same guys, and he would never cease to make me laugh hysterically when I needed my spirits lifted. The point is – we felt really loved by each other, and we had very different roles in high school (we went to different schools). I was bullied and made fun of while he was voted Most Popular or something along those lines. I want this film to show that it is okay to be different and that diversity should be celebrated!"

To donate to the Kickstarter fund, go to http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/jwilker/death-to-prom. □

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REVIEW | John Townsend



Patrick D. Kennedy (Pugsley), Pippa Pearthree (Grandma), Sara Gettelfinger (Morticia), Douglas Sills (Gomez), Tom Corbeil (Lurch), Cortney Wolfson (Wednesday) and Blake Hammond (Uncle Fester)

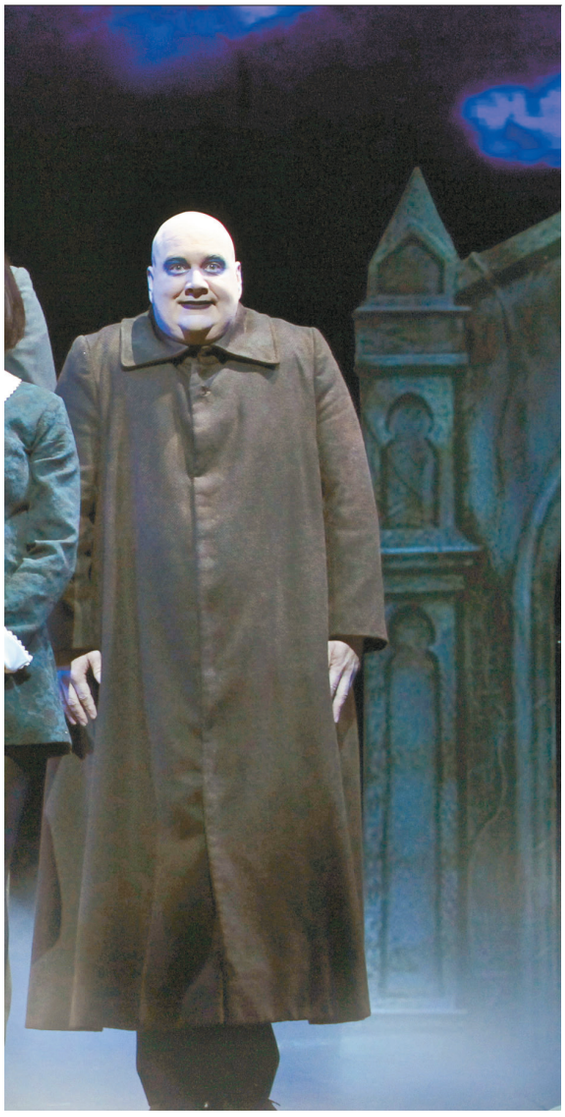
# Addams Family Values And What's Normal?

## Revamped Broadway Musical Casts A New Spell in National Tour

YOU MAY know *The Addams Family* musical from its popular Broadway run but the national tour has made major revisions that have reportedly improved the show significantly. In a highly unusual action, the original creative team actually came back to make those revisions, rather than some corporate committee. That said, many theater artists think that this is the way plays and musicals should be developed in the first place – a developmental process that takes the time it needs rather than rushed into an engagement prematurely.

Some of composer/lyricist Andrew Lippa's original songs were cut and three new ones added. The script's plot, co-written by Marshall Brickman and Rick Elice, has been tightened, so the characters' motivations are clearer. New York stage *aficionadoes* will like that Jerry Zaks has directed the tour and that Pippa Pearthree, who wowed us at the Public Theater in the '80s with *Aunt Dan and Lemon*, plays Grandma.

The musical's characters are of course, unconventional to say the least. *The Addams Family* tradition began with Charles Addams's cartoons in the New Yorker maga-



'ester) in THE ADDAMS FAMILY. (Photos by Jeremy Daniel)





Cortney Wolfson (Wednesday) and Patrick D. Kennedy (Pugsley) (Above). Sara Gettelfinger (Morticia) and Company in THE ADDAMS FAMILY.

zine in the 1930s and the captions essentially evolved into television scripts for the popular mid-1960s television series. The gloomy Addams mansion is home to a family and their servants who seemed to have stepped out of a '30s horror film. Though Gomez and Morticia, their daughter Wednesday, Uncle Fester, manservant Lurch and the rest might send chills down some spines, they are actually more human and hospitable than some of their supposedly 'normal' visitors. Herein lies the engine of Addams Family humor.

Brian Justin Crum who plays Lucas, the 'normal' young man who Wednesday falls in love with says the folks on tour use the catchphrase: 'define normal'. This aligns with Broadway's interest over the past decade to question what we think of as normal and abnormal in other musicals as well, like *Wicked and Avenue Q*.

Crum, known for his boy-next-door portrayals and beach boy looks, says "Lucas comes to terms with the fact that he doesn't have to follow his parents' path. He can make his own way and do his own thing and love the girl that he loves, even if his parents don't necessarily approve in the beginning. He's a Midwestern boy with two parents that are upper-middle-class and 'normal'. She's a stay-at-home mom and they want him to marry a nice pretty girl from Ohio. And he shows them this dark girl who lives in New York City with these really kooky parents. So he kind of forces them to see that: 'No! This is my time! My decision.' And he gets to follow his heart. It's about turning against what you're supposed to as the norm."

Blake Hammond who plays Uncle Fester wasn't able to see the show on Broadway because he himself was on Broadway performing at the same show times in *Sister Act*. So Hammond looked to the original cartoons for inspiration. He shares, "There is a lot of whimsical movement in those characters in the cartoon. They're just not stagnant drawings. Most of the time, when you see Fester in a drawing, he doesn't use his arms a whole lot unless he's sort of in the air somehow. So I take him as his arms are always pretty much by his side, and I like that because it sort of makes me different from anyone else in the show. I'm not married to it. I have to gesture sometime certainly. When he's standing still I try to make him stand completely still, except for the facial."

Hammond also draws from his childhood to connect with the piece emotionally. He says he grew up "in a conventional household by all appearances, but completely crazy inside, but in a great way, in a loving way. But I never felt like I completely fit in. Of course, that's sort of given when you're 12 or 13 years old and you start realizing you're gay." Hammond says he's come to believe that 'normal is in the eye of the beholder."

Something that seems automatically *abnormal* to most Western minds is the concept of ancestors as anything other than something fictional, relegated to thrillers and Non-Western belief systems. But not so for The Addamses. Spirits are part of reality. To support this, Alexandra Matteo, the Assistant Dance Captain and understudy for Wednesday, helps to make sure the cast crisply maintains Sergio Trujillo's (*Jersey Boys, Next to Normal, Memphis*) choreography. She describes the movement as "very sharp and angular, very rigid, especially for The Ancestors, who are the ensemble, because they are all dead ancestors of the family past. Lots of hinge-ing, some might say awkward movement. But it looks really, really cool. It's a little quirky like I think The Addams Family should be."

Regarding the heart within choreography, Matteo points out "even though these are 'darker' people, in essence, they're still people. They're still human and they still have feelings and emotions and are dealing with very real things." In other words, you could say, they're normal. □

**The Addams Family, The Broadway Musical**
May 8-20
Ordway Center, 345 Washington St., St. Paul
(651) 224-4222
www.ordway.org



## SPOTLIGHT | John Townsend



*Are You Now Or Have You Ever Been…* Photo courtesy of Carlyle Brown & Company

### *Are You Now Or Have You Ever Been…*

**Through May 20**
**Guthrie's Dowling Studio, 818 So. 2nd St., Mpls.**
**(612) 377-2224**
**www.guthrietheater.org**

When we think of the victims of the McCarthy Era, they tend to be white or Jewish. But African-American writer-across-the-genres, Langston Hughes, was also targeted. Like many of his fellow targets, he was an artist, and right wingers, religious zealots, and fascists are very savvy about the power of art in deconstructing myths that authoritarians want kept intact. Artistic expression must be limited because it is often layered, complex, nonlinear and innovative. Recall that in the late 1980s and early '90s it was the ultraneocon GOP Senator Jesse Helms who declared 'Culture War' on what he saw as an overly permissive National Endowment For The Arts (NEA). (Homophobia, by the way, was intrinsic to that. In service of the conservative slur, 'commie-pinko-fag.')

Indeed, 40 years after McCarthyism proper, Helms and his ilk were still derisively bouncing the terms 'communist', 'socialist', 'collectivist', and 'Marxist' to define whatever idea/concept they might threatened by, whether those terms applied or not. (And likely they did not.) The same stigmatizing terminology is tossed around daily by Republican demagogues like Rush Limbaugh, Congressman Allen West (an African-American), Sean Hannity, and hundreds of right wing radio shock jocks who outnumber their American airwaves left wing counterpoints ten to one. Such terms automatically massively demonize unless the public is informed, educated, and dis-indoctrinated otherwise. Moreover, recall that Hughes was a black man in the '50s when 'negro' was the operative defining term and could be even more deeply marginalized by McCarthyistic terminology than his white and Jewish co-targets.

Playwright Carlyle Brown has focused his speculative drama on Hughes's natural way of expressing who he was as a black man who resisted commercial servitude to white hegemony's comfort zone. He says, "I see him as my predecessor who has left a legacy of literary and social activism that is synonymous with the history of African-American literature. His legacy reminds me of my purpose and encourages me to focus on my own place in the literary lineage that he and other African-American writers have forged for us."

The workshop production of *Are You Now…* at Pillsbury House in '08 was a knockout, but now that it's getting staged at Dowling Studio by the same director, Noel Raymond, it's apt to be even better given more rehearsal time and designers for set, costumes, lighting, sound and props. Gavin Lawrence reprises his powerhouse lead performance along with some of the same great House UnAmerican Activities Committee (HUAC) performances from before. John Middleton of the original staging and newcomer Matt Rein will play Roy Cohn and David Schine, two notorious Jewish closet case consultants who cravenly capitalized on the McCarthy madness. Though Brown doesn't go there, some say that Hughes was gay or bisexual.

Raymond shares "overall the universality of the play is to me in the politics of extremes –the need to vilify opposing viewpoints and label them 'anti-American' to maintain and build power and control. Then there is race, which is an undercurrent that fuels hate and fear and intensifies the need to keep control. And art which is so much about revealing the multifaceted nature of our existence and interactions and subverting or at least deconstructing widely accepted but narrowly defined version of 'truth' – something that can't be tolerated by people or groups working to maintain and amass power."

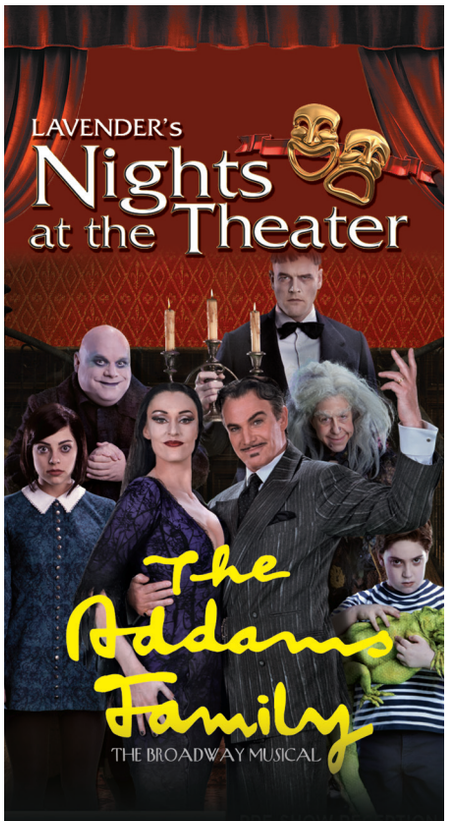


*Faith: A Dance for Life.* Photo courtesy of Ballet of the Dolls

### *Faith: A Dance for Life*

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**www.ordway.org**

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The second-century collection of magical tales by Apuleius, also titled *Metamorphoses* (not to be confused with Ovid's), has been adapted for stage by Liz Neerland who has a strong affinity with classic literature. She knows how to theatricalize big, heady ideas. But don't worry, it won't be in the original's language, Latin.

Neerland says she was drawn to the book because "first, the stories themselves seemed so theatrical, and second, that despite its influence on so many things, it is relatively unknown. I love good source material that I can really dig my hands into, and *The Golden Ass* provided a great opportunity. The book is known for being bawdy and hilarious and telling stories about regular people. In our version, eunuchs become drag queens, and the Farmer and His Wife become the Farmer and Her Wife, and the Story of the Two Cooks has moments of Kabuki."



*Steampunk Delusions.* Photo by Steve Schroer & Ryan Ripley

### *Steampunk Delusions*

**Through May 12**
**Open Eye Theatre, 506 E. 24th St., Mpls.**
**(612) 581-2229**
**www.hardcovertheater.org**

Two reflections of 19th century scientific imagination's 'Steampunk Era' spark this new stage invention. Steve Schroer, an inspired adaptor and director of literary works for stage, says of Fitz-James O'Brian's 1858 story, *The Diamond Lens: A Microscopic Fantasy of Love & Murder*, 'the fantastic elements arise out of imagining what machines might some day be able to do. A microscope serves as a portal to another world. Reminds me of Arthur C. Clarke's dictum that any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic."

Co-creators Adrienne English and Joshua Scrimshaw invent a silent comedy melodrama, *To Mars With Tesla; or The Interplanetary Machinations of Evil Thomas Edison*. Scrimshaw says "our show starts out with the historically accurate conflict between (Nikolai) Tesla and Edison over alternating and direct current systems. Edison did try alot of desperate and dirty tricks to discredit alternating current, including financially backing the invention of the electric chair to show alternating current's dangers. The show takes a fantastical turn and the rivalry between Tesla and Edison leads them to encounters with Pierre and Marie Curie, not to mention the King and Queen of Mars!"



*Time Stands Still.* Photo courtesy of the Guthrie Theater

### *Time Stands Still*

**Through May 20**
**Guthrie Proscenium Theater, 818 So. 2nd St., Mpls.**
**(612) 377-2224**
**www.guthrietheater.org**

(1) Re-assess and then re-navigate your life at midlife or stay on the same course? (2) How can Americans rationalize turning their backs on suffering throughout the world when we are supposedly the only superpower? These two profound questions permeate the discussion playwright Donald Margulies offers in this engaging comedy-drama.

James (Bill McCallum), a journalist, and Sarah (Sarah Agnew), a photographer, have been together and covered global hot spots since they were young adults. Adrenaline, curiosity, courage, and spartan staminas have long served their on-the-go lifestyles. But when Sarah is severely injured by a roadside bomb in Iraq, the nonmarried but committed couple re-examines their lives in a New York flat while she convalesces.

When publisher and longtime friend, Richard (Mark Benninghofen) arrives with his classically beautiful, much younger fiance, Mandy (Valeri Mudek), Sarah and James chalk up the intergenerational relationship as a symptom of Richard's midlife crisis. But are they being unfairly judgemental about intergenerational love relationships?

Pulitzer Prize-winner Margulies has us reconsider social judgements toward such relationships, especially when the man is much older than the woman. That said, he also thoughtfully considers that there can be drawbacks to such pairings.

Unfortunately, thoughtfulness deflates when he weighs Mandy's apoliticism against Sarah's consciousness, and makes them seem co-equal in value with Mandy actually getting the benefit of the doubt. Sarah is written at a pitch between irritable and irate. Mandy, angelic and unquestioning. It's a bit galling.

Mandy emotes and minimizes "There's so much beauty in the world. But you only see misery. Both of you." So take that into consideration when you read Margulies's rather pompous notes from his *This Be Art* reprinted in the program. Ironically, the program includes fine comments by Pulitzer Prize-winner Chris Hedges, whose life itself answers Mandy's mawkish query.

On the plus side, James and Sarah wrestle with the problem of loving one another while having grown apart in ways that are just surfacing. In our time when people are living longer, more middle agers, realizing they may well have 30 or 40 years left ahead of them, are opting for separation. Can James and Sarah discover a new mutual path as they now go into their middle years? This is the area where Margulies does well, and on this point his play is timely.

Director Joe Dowling's cast plays their roles with natural ease, finding nuance and humor. One problem: Agnew's injury makeup application stays the same throughout, despite the fact that the action occurs over several months. In reality there would have been some healing. □



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Directed by MARK VALDEZ
APRIL 20 – MAY 13

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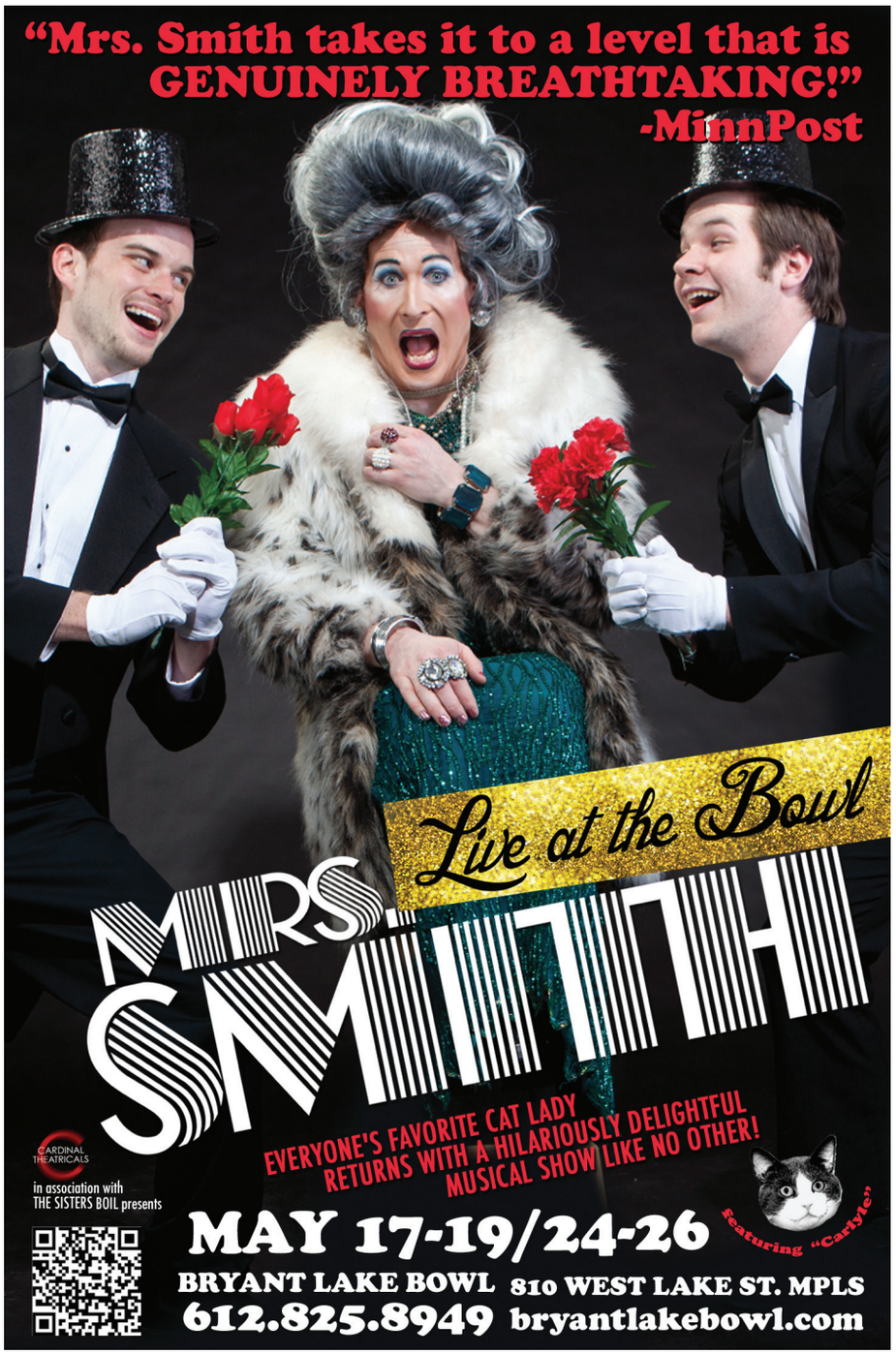


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## MUSIC | Ed Huyck



### RUFUS WAINWRIGHT
***Out of the Game***

Wainwright's wry humor and elegant song-craft get a fresh coat of paint via producer Mark Ronson, who gives these 12 tracks a warm, analog vibe that wouldn't have been out of place on a renegade rock album from the 1970s by Randy Newman or Lou Reed, all the way down to the chorus of female backup singers. Yet it is his increased maturity that draws the listener through the album, from leaving dreams of stardom behind (the title track) to songs about his late mother ("Candles") to a look at how his infant daughter, Viva, will experience the lives of her two dads ("Montauk"). A cast of all stars, from members of Wilco to Sean Lennon to his sister Martha, help, but this is Rufus' triumph.



### MADONNA
***MDNA***

It's hard to get down on someone who has such a long, innovative career, but Madonna is in a deep musical rut on *MDNA*. After spending much of her career on the leading edge of dance and pop music, she sounds woefully behind the curve, right down to aping spiritual descendants like Lady Gaga. The Egg isn't here, but the likes of Nicki Minaj, M.I.A. and (God no) LMFAO are in the house. While her natural talent keeps it all together better than say Minaj, it's not much better than most of the current crop. Sure there are songs that will probably pack a dance floor, but Madonna's best songs have always had a bigger life than that, and I don't hear that here.



### CHASTITY BROWN
***Back-Road Highways***

The Minnesotan-by-way-of-Tennessee singer-songwriter returns with her fourth release, a strong set of driving, soulful tunes that evoke locations of the title, be they in the deep-South or the heart of the Midwest. Brown works with a wide pallet of musical influences, producing songs that sound instantly modern and timeless at the same moment. Brown traveled back to her home state to make the album and that only seems to have intensified her already rock-solid self-confidence. After all, it takes a lot to honestly put yourself out there for the world to see, and songs like the album opener "House Been Burnin'" or middle-album standout "Leroy" find Brown bringing us into her world. The music evokes everything from down-home soul to modern country, all presented with aplomb.



### NICKI MINAJ
***Pink Friday: Roman Reloaded***

Minaj's second set is as confused as the title, which evokes both Minaj's first album and her main alter ego. The special edition features more than 20 songs, but whatever the set, the album is in desperate need of a trim. Minaj has the swagger and attitude to make it in today's pop world, and she occasionally shows some musical smarts, but the guest artists eventually overwhelm whatever personality (or personalities as it were) she brings to the table. It doesn't help that it opens with the absolutely putrid "Roman Holiday," which manages to induce a headache in just a few minutes. The space-age beats help to pump up a few of the tracks that follow, while the bright pop of "Starships" is a bit better. □




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# Roadtrip Favorites

I'm a top-down kind of girl. When the weather heats up, I get kind of itchy to hit that open road, preferably in a convertible. We're blessed with gorgeous roadside scenery in this state. The problem is rolling into an unknown town and trying to find a bite to eat. Here are a few of my favorite places to step off the road and savor the flavors of our favorite, most fleeting season.




Going to see where Dorothy was born? Stop in at the Sawmill Inn in Grand Rapids. Photo by Andy Lien

**Grand Rapids** was born a small logging town, but it may be better known to our community as the place where little Frances Gumm was born. Baby girl would grow up to be better known as Judy Garland. At the edge of town sits the Judy Garland museum, where guests can wander through the house where she lived (for her first four years). The house had once been in the middle of town, but has since been moved to the outskirts and right next to the Sawmill Inn, one of the few family-owned hotels that still exists, it seems. The chainsaw-carved Viking greets you in the lobby when checking in. The best place in town for dinner is just off that lobby in the **Cedars Dining Room.** The room that time forgot is wood-flanked with a small fireplace in the center. Abandon all diets here. The dish to order is the exquisite prime rib. Crusty, beautifully seasoned on the outside and blushing, juicy-tender in the center. The meal is served with a light-as-air popover, full of chewy, egg-custard flavor. There is an abundant choice of sides – the au gratin potatoes, cheese-laden hash browns under a satisfying crust – but the wild rice is like none other.

The twisting, hilly roads leading from the Cities down to **Red Wing** are stunning, lush, and full of a hundred different shades of vibrant green. Do a little shopping for their world famous pottery or boots. Red Wing wares are made to last for generations, and a lot already have. When it's time to grab a bite to eat, duck over the river and settle into the patio at the **Harbor Bar Restaurant and Marina.** If you're lucky, there might even be a hammock with space to settle back into. They key to coming here is to take a deep breath and let go of illusions of anything happening quickly. The best dishes here come directly from the giant, black grill, manned by a gentleman that looks like he might have been working this pit for years. The food is authentic Caribbean, with a killer Jamaican Jerk sauce. The Jerk chicken is a perfect dish for backyard eating, with your toes dug into the grass. Sip a Red Stripe, or channel a little Jimmy Buffet with a margarita. Watch the river boats dock and depart, there's no reason to rush this sort of summer moment.

A straight shot up Interstate 35 from the metro area will bring you to the shores of Lake Superior quickly, but it's much more fun to meander up on the Wisconsin 35 side. Roll in through the blue-collar West Side, drive the twisty Skyline Parkway and carefully eye the breathtaking vistas (don't take those eyes off that road for too long). Any summer weekend with a little sunshine is a great time to visit **Duluth,** with their vibrant local arts and music scene. Fitger's Brewhouse, Cahoots and Sir Benedict's are great spots for easy music most nights.

For roadtrip meals, avoid the tourist traps in Canal Park or the forever-line wait at the New Scenic Café and try the **Duluth Grill** in West Duluth. On the surface it might appear like your average family run diner, but upon closer inspection, you'll find a menu full of locally sourced ingredients. Some are so local that they've come from the garden outside. The corned beef hash is a massive take on ↦

Continued on page 34

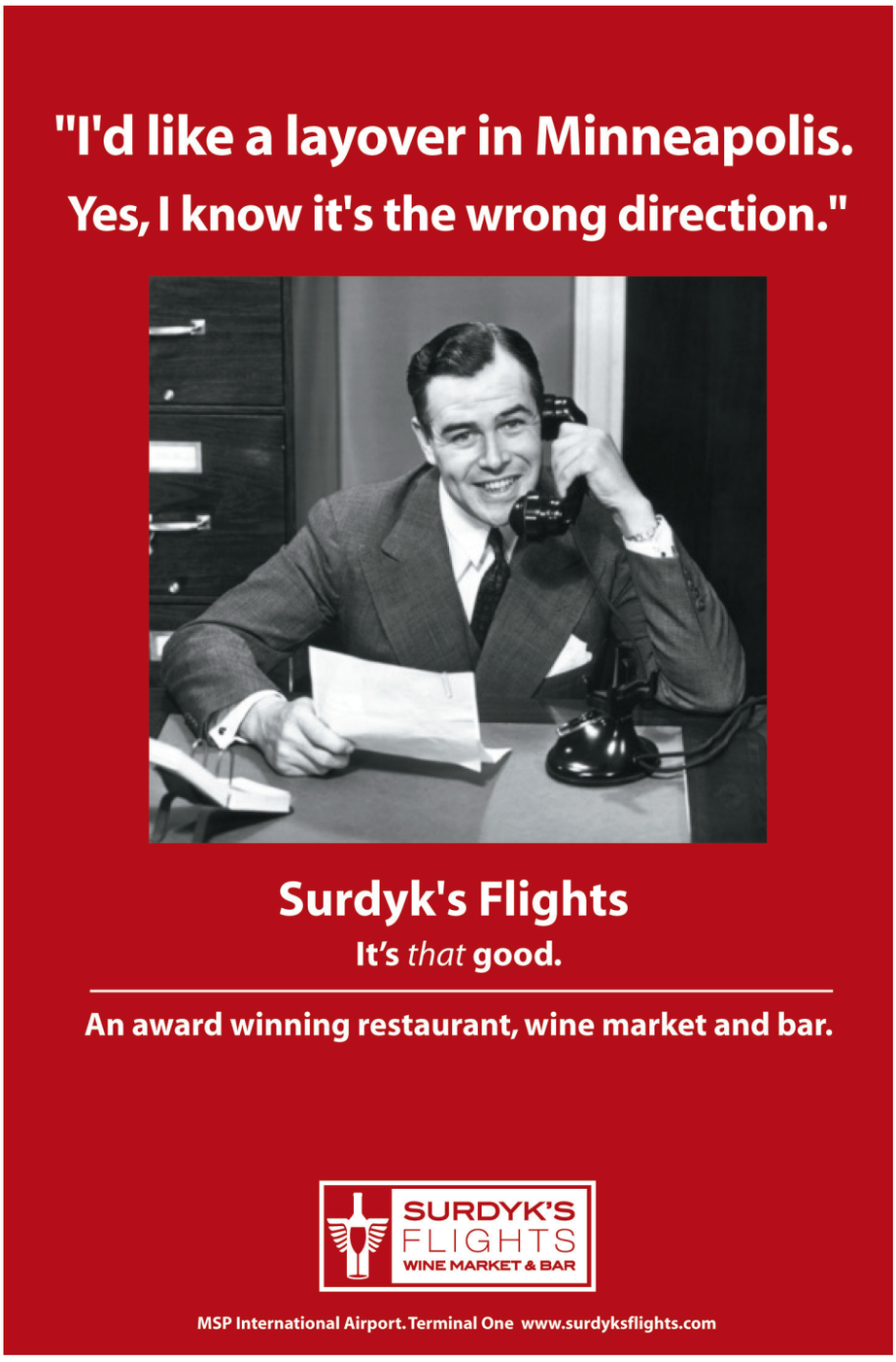
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A hairy-chested, brutish Viking greets visitors in the lobby of the Sawmill Inn. Photo by Andy Lien

the classic, all homemade and topped with eggs that come from happy chickens. For vegetarians, the wild rice melt is gooey, hearty and all that there is to love about a sandwich. The extensive menu also has plenty of other veggie and gluten –free options. And if you're feeling fancy – why not try the duck confit? What other diner offers that? Your coffee cup will never reach empty, as the staff is full of people who have worked here since the beginning. There's no question that each of them honestly cares that you enjoy your dining experience. □

**www.sawmillinn.com**
**www.exploreminnesota.com**
**www.redwing.org**
**www.visitduluth.com**
**www.duluthgrill.com**



The Duluth Grill's homey exterior (above, opposite) and gooey Wild Rice Melt with fries (above). Photos by Joy Summers















## NEWSY BITS

**Mona** is now open! Owner Lisa Carlson, who has worked in such storied kitchens as Aquavit, L'Atelier de Joel Robuchon in New York, and Corner Table locally, now owns her own place. Located on the first floor of the Accenture building, the space has been transformed into a sleek supper club sort of place. The food is locally focused, but not exclusively so. The kitchen is open and there will be plenty of patio seating soon. Open for lunch and dinner.

New food trucks are on the way. There is plenty of room on the streets for more tasty eats and my favorite summer trend continues to grow. The VW mini bus that **Ngon Bistro** is pulling together is almost ready to make a debut. **Bloomy's Roast Beef** just hit the streets last weekend and will start out in St. Paul. Check back next issue for more information!

**Blue Door Pub** continues their expansion plans. Construction has already begun on their new Longfellow neighborhood spot. Last week they found out that they have been approved for a wine and beer liquor license. In addition to getting a little Minneapolis Blucy fix, fans can still sip the fantastic beer selection like the one they boast at the teensy original location in St. Paul. I can't wait to see this great neighborhood get another dining destination.

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# SUMMER GETAWAYS

## HIT THE ROADS AND RIVERS FOR SUMMER ADVENTURES


ACCOMMODATING COMMUNITY P.38

VACATIONLAND P. 46


By Kathleen Watson & Andy Lien



One of the best parts of vacation is finding the perfect place to relax and unwind at the end of the day. Members of the GLBT community deserve establishments that support and welcome the GLBT community all while providing a comfortable and charming retreat. Minnesota and Wisconsin offer some of the best bed and breakfasts that are tailored to the community and are bound to impress guests more than a traditional chain hotel. Here are some top-notch GLBT-owned establishments that welcome guests from all walks of life.

## AMERICAN EAGLE BLUFF BED & BREAKFAST

**Establishment: American Eagle Bluff Bed and Breakfast**
**Read's Landing, MN**
**Price: $175 per night in peak season (additional nights are $150)**
**Breakfast included: yes**
**Pets allowed: no**
**Other: no kids, no smoking**

If you're looking for a complete escape, American Eagle Bluff Bed and Breakfast offers the ultimate sanctuary. Located on top of its own bluff in Read's Landing, MN, this 40-acre retreat overlooks both the Mississippi and Chippewa River Valleys. With its awe-inspiring views and complete solitude, gay owners Perry Juenemann and Raynard Peterson describe the place as "the perfect place to paint a painting, or write a story or a book."

**For more information,**
**visit www.americaneaglebluffbedandbreakfast.com**

Before opening American Eagle Bluff B&B, Raynard and Perry worked for eight years to restore the 1870s red brick farmhouse. The inn opened in 2010, with its first guests being a gay couple from Minneapolis.

Surrounded by an orchard which offers a multitude of fruits, the inn is completely isolated and private. Perry notes, "we don't even stay on the acreage—we are down on the main road." The couple drives guests up to the inn and returns in the morning to fix a complete country breakfast.

Perry says their inn "doesn't look like your typical bed and breakfast." The establishment is decorated with modern art,




Raynard and Perry, American Eagle Bluff Bed and Breakfast. Photo by Andy Lien





American Eagle Bluff is a private estate for your stay with sweeping vistas and heirloom landscaping. Perfect for rest, relaxation, and recreation. Photos by Andy Lien



handmade rugs, and antiques which "give the home a modern and eclectic twist." Guests have their choice of two suites—the Chippewa Room or the Birch Room—both with private baths and outstanding views.

While at American Eagle Bluff, guests can enjoy hiking out to an observation deck that overlooks Wisconsin and Minnesota, going on river cruises, visiting jewelry and antique shops in the area, or golfing. Walking through the rose gardens and bird-watching also allow visitors to embrace the great outdoors. Guests can also relax in the inn's library, which offers a variety of books and magazines.

When describing American Eagle Bluff, Perry says "it's like being up in heaven.



Mandy and Colleen, Stone Mill Hotel and Suites. Photo by Andy Lien

## STONE MILL HOTEL AND SUITES

**Establishment: Stone Mill Hotel and Suites**
**Lanesboro, MN**
**Price: $80-180, based on room and season**
**Breakfast included: yes**
**Pets allowed: no**

An old cold-storage building turned hotel, Stone Mill Hotel and Suites offers an historic, hometown environment in which to relax and revitalize. Located in Lanesboro, the establishment is currently owned and operated by Colleen Lamon and Mandy Smith. Each of the ten rooms and suites reflect the area's history and culture, with themed rooms like the Amish Room, the Egg Jacuzzi Suite, and the Bicycle Loft suite.

Colleen describes the hotel as "a quaint lodging setting in a unique historic community, and my partner and I welcome everyone." She mentions that Lanesboro is extremely GLBT-friendly, saying that



"this is one of the communities where you can hold hands and walk down the street and no one gives you a second look."

The limestone building has an on-site day spa which offers a variety of massage services including couples massage. Guests can shop in local retail stores which sell a variety of handmade goods from local artisans. Colleen also encourages visitors to check out Scenic Valley Winery, which makes wines from locally grown fruits and veggies.

Stone Mill offers access to informational tours that celebrate the history of Lanesboro. Tours of the local Amish communities and the Lanesboro Trolley Tours allow guests to learn more about the rich history of Lanesboro.

A variety of outdoor activities are available for more adventurous folk. Colleen notes that guests love the 60-mile paved Root River Bicycle Trail, which is considered "the Cadillac of trails." Guests can also enjoy water activities on the river. After a long day of outdoor activities, the Jacuzzi suites are perfect for a bit of romantic relaxation.

An expanded continental breakfast is available in the morning, and Colleen notes that they "include as many local products as possible" on the spread. Local pastries, local milk, and eggs from the Amish community make breakfast have a homegrown touch that reflects the hotel's conscious decision to support and embrace the community.

Relax in the Day Spa and spend your night in the Egg Suite in an old Stone Mill. Photos courtesy of Stone Mill Hotel and Suites



**For more information, visit www.stonemillsuites.com**

## FILLMORE HOUSE BED AND BREAKFAST

**Establishment: Fillmore House Bed and Breakfast**
**Lanesboro, MN**
**Price: $100-170, depending on room and days**
**Breakfast included: yes**
**Pets allowed: no**

Built 100 years ago in Lanesboro, the Fillmore House Bed and Breakfast has changed hands countless times before finding the perfect couple to own it. The establishment has what owners Brian Luna and his partner Bob call a "high-end, comfortable, more of a Victorian, antique feel." The couple bought the house five years ago, and they have transformed it into a three-room oasis complete with beautiful gardens and patios where guests can pass the time. Guests also enjoy private bathrooms and access to the house's library.

Brian and Bob know how to provide a welcoming and relaxing environment. Guests begin their stay with a cocktail hour between 3-6 pm, complete with chilled champagne and stuffed strawberries. After




Brian and Vivian, Fillmore House Bed and Breakfast. Photo by Andy Lien


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The Fillmore House's front porch charm in Lanesboro. Photos by Andy Lien



a night on the town or a comfortable night in, visitors can retire to one of three rooms named after the couple's grandmothers and decorated to match their personalities.

Along with all the outdoor activities Lanesboro has to offer, Brian suggests attending a show at the Commonweal Theater or taking an Amish tour, and he is more than happy to point guests in the direction of GLBT-owned shops downtown.

Guests enjoy a three-course breakfast in the morning, including banana bread French toast with homemade caramel sauce and sausage. Brian says that "it's a breakfast that we try to make sure everyone has…it's our signature breakfast." Members of the GLBT community also receive a 10% discount off their stay.

**For more information,**
**visit www.fillmorehousebandb.com**







A "Pop and Pop" Motel in Grand Marais. Photos courtesy of The Mangy Moose

## THE MANGY MOOSE MOTEL

**Establishment: The Mangy Moose Motel**
**Grand Marais, MN**
**Price: $70-120, depending on room and season**
**Breakfast included: no**
**Pets allowed: yes, pets stay free**
**Other: no smoking**

Opening its doors on May 1, The Mangy Moose Motel is now under gay ownership. Dave Rak and partner Don Bertolini can't wait for guests to stay at the newly updated 10-room establishment. Dave says that "it's kind of one of those 1950s 'mom and pop' hotels, except now it's becoming a 'pop and pop' hotel."

Each room has its own bathroom, and some rooms also have small kitchens. Guests can also make full use of the picnic tables and the outdoor patio area. Dave notes that "the rooms kind of have more of a Northwoods type of feel to it. And the hotel has, of course, moose pictures in it."

The Mangy Moose is located within two or three blocks of the main street in Grand Marais. Dave

suggests heading in that direction to enjoy a variety of cute local shops, artist galleries, and bookstores. He also notes that "the whole area is GLBT-friendly," especially due to the amount of GLBT-friendly artists that have moved to the area over the past couple of decades.

Dave also notes that there's never a dull moment in Grand Marais. Guests can enjoy the hiking trails nearby, especially in the Superior National Forest and on Pincushion Mountain. Other local activities include horseback riding, water activities on Lake Superior, biking, and camping. The Mangy Moose is a perfect stop for people going to and from the Boundary Waters, and Dave says that "sometimes people who are on their way up or on their way back will stop to shower before returning to civilization."

Dave believes that the best part about The Mangy Moose is its location and the activity options available in the area. "What we love is that we are accessible to everything that's going on in Grand Marais, whether you like to get out and go hiking and have an active vacation, or if you want to be much more leisurely, you can come on up and hang out, and you can walk three blocks to do a little shopping. It fits a variety of people."

**For more information,**
**visit www.mangymoosemotel.com**

## NORTHERN COMFORT BED AND BREAKFAST

**Establishment: Northern Comfort Bed and Breakfast**
**Embarrass, MN**
**Price: $70-95**
**Breakfast included: yes**
**Pets allowed: yes**

Built in 1901, this Finnish log home is nestled on a 17-acre farm which offers peacefulness and serenity for its guests. With a traditional wood-burning Finnish spa and plenty of beautiful grounds, this establishment is bound to be a favorite among people who need the ultimate retreat from the hustle and bustle of the cities. Owners Kathy Johnson and Pam Bennet hope that guests can relax and feel completely comfortable to be themselves on the farm. Pam attests, "it's very peaceful and serene."

Guests are encouraged to explore all the additional historic buildings on the farm, including the couple's craft and antique store, Homespun Acres. Featured in the store are Kathy's homemade soaps and candles. Other local artisans contribute their wares as well. Also, a great deal of wildlife makes its way onto the homestead, making it a great place for nature-watching. Outdoor









Old Bed and Breakfast on the Range. A comfy farmhouse and antique store at Kathy and Pam's place in Embarrass. Photos courtesy of Northern Comfort Bed and Breakfast



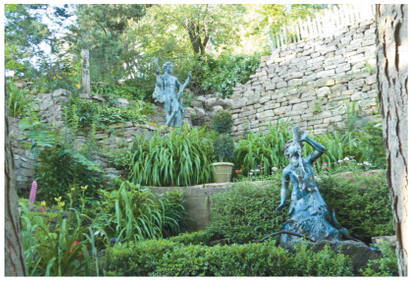
activities such as hiking, biking, and snowmobiling all provide thrills for the outdoor adventure-seekers.

The full gourmet breakfast is made by Kathy each morning, and Pam raves that Kathy is "an excellent cook." The couple also serves wine and cheese in the evening, and guests are encouraged to saunter into the smaller local towns for lunch and dinner.

Several guests have made Northern Comfort their go-to bed and breakfast, and Kathy and Pam love seeing familiar faces. Pam also notes, "It's a cool experience. We can truly say that in the past four years we've been open, we haven't had any negative experiences at all."

Pam says the best way to describe Northern Comfort is that it "feels like home, if home was a good place for you."

**For more information, visit www.northerncomfortmn.com.**



A garden sanctuary with nearby antiques, ice cream, coffee, art, shopping, and sleeping in Alma, Wisconsin. Photos courtesy of Hotel de Ville




## HOTEL DE VILLE

**Establishment: Hotel de Ville**
**Alma, WI**
**Price: $55-140, depending on room**
**Breakfast included: no**
**Pets allowed: yes**

Running a romantic hotel was always a dream for Dan Kordiak and Jeff Shilts. The couple spent several years remodeling and decorating three historic buildings to create an establishment that reflects the "romance of the South of France…without the attitude." Dan continued building their legacy in Alma after Jeff's death, and the hotel reflects Jeff's beautiful spirit.

Hotel de Ville is a multi-building complex, complete with Fire and Ice (an ice cream and coffee shop), the Gypsy Wagon antique hotel, and a local bakery. Dan and Jeff worked tirelessly to restore the downtown area of Alma with their businesses, and local artisans are now drawn to the area due to the success of Hotel de Ville.

Dan notes, "We've had a very small gay following—almost nothing." He hopes that the community will be drawn to his hotel due to the gardens and the unique decorating scheme Jeff created. "When we first opened,



we went to Wilde Roast to look at their decorating…and we said 'like this, but a little more gay.'"

Dan says the hotel "offers the nicest rooms in 100 miles," and his returning visitors can attest to the beauty of the establishment. Beautiful gardens grace the grounds, complete with sculptures and surprises that make it "breathtaking at any time of year." Suites are complete with kitchens, full bathrooms, oil paintings, and scenic views of the Mississippi River or the hotel's Italianate gardens.

If you decide to venture out of the beautiful property, Dan can point you to countless stores and attractions in historic Alma. The community is very welcoming to GLBT people, and when the whole town showed up for Jeff's funeral, Dan knew that the Alma community was the perfect place to carry out Jeff's legacy. He says, "There is no way anyone would be anything but welcoming, especially if you say you're staying at the Hotel de Ville."

For more information, visit https://sites.google.com/site/hoteldevillealma/home.

## BELLE RIVE BED BREAKFAST

**Establishment: Belle Rive Bed and Breakfast, Lanesboro, MN**
**Price: $125-150**
**Breakfast included: yes**
**Pets allowed: no**
**Other: no smoking, no children**

Formerly owned by partners Denny and Rocky, Belle Rive is under new management. Though it is no longer GLBT-owned, the new owners are very welcoming to the community. Owner Jim Martin says that the establishment offers "privacy, comfort, and charm" and that it is "designed for a couple to have complete privacy." Belle Rive is yet another treasure among treasures in the Lanesboro area! □







# VACATIONLAND

by Andy Lien



Photos by Andy Lien

## Buffalo Plaid

The family cabin. Through blood and good relations, I am fortunate enough to have a cabin in the family. Built by my great grandparents in the 1950s on a small lake near Brainerd, the descendants share our inheritance between the great-grandparents' three children, meaning the Liens get it every third week of the non-winter seasons. And, now that I can get wifi up there with my phone (I know…gasp…it's sacrilege), I try to get up there as often as possible.

I have memories both of time spent at the cabin as well as time spent roaming around the Brainerd Lakes area. We'd go see Paul Bunyan. We'd visit Deer Land. We'd romp around the best flea market I've ever been to that used to be held every weekend in Nisswa. Grandma and Grandpa would always go and be looking for something…farm implements, Skelly memorabilia, books. We'd have breakfast at Sportland or Ganley's. Often, there would be evening drives to Crosslake or Gull Lake, many times finding a Supper Club for cocktails and dinner. I'd order orange roughy or shrimp and Grandpa would tell me I'd grow monkey ears from eating the shrimp tails. So, I'd eat more of them, hoping he was telling the truth. Afternoons would be spent swimming, sometimes golfing. The cabin meant leisure and this was a Vacation Wonderland. Vacationland, even just for a weekend at a time.

As I've gotten older and come up here either with friends, family, or alone, I've challenged myself to find the places from my childhood memories. I was thrilled when I stumbled upon Howard's Barn, a place where my grandparents would golf. One year, I recall that because I didn't want to go golfing, they bought me a Tiger Beat magazine, instead. It was one afternoon, ages ago. To find it was more than a figment of my imagination last year by seeing it in person, I felt validated. So, I go exploring. I see if I can do like they did and I just start driving and see where I end up. Or, I have a planned route and make it happen. Both scenarios are equally satisfying.

Recently, friend Aisha was up for a visit and we did a loop that took us over to Nisswa, up through Pequot Lakes, over to Breezy Point, up through Ideal Corners, and over to Crosslake…before coming back down to the cabin which is near Merrifield. Did you get that? It's over, up, over, up, over, and down. Easy.

It was an off-day, which is something

# The Wharf



Photos by Andy Lien

I call the days when Vacationland isn't swarming with people. Off-days are not Saturdays. They're not Fridays or holidays, even. They're the midweek days or Sundays when everyone is heading back to the Cities. Off-days are the best days to go adventuring in Vacationland.

Nisswa is a town that I lovingly remember for its souvenir traps. Like a moth to a flame, I was drawn to them as a child–like my niece and nephew are drawn to them now. I swear, the Totem Pole on Main Street shines like a beacon to all children within a 10-mile radius of Nisswa. It was–and is–full of a lot of novelty. Knowing exactly what's in there, I now choose to skip it unless I've got the kids with me. It used to be where I'd start, but now it's where I walk past with a smile on my lips.

Instead of novelty, I start with Adirondack Coffee. That belies my age, for sure.

Adirondack Coffee has a wonderful aesthetic to it–well, it's an Adirondack aesthetic and they pull it off well with the furnishings and the construction materials. As we ordered our coffee drinks, I scanned the bakery case and decided to get an almond-encrusted croissant. Their pastries are baked at Adirondack daily, which surprised me, and the croissant was delicious, which delighted me.

Not only was it encrusted in almonds, but there was a channel of almond paste within. Lovely. Adirondack sells its own coffee, some of it named after local landmarks like "Hole In The Day Lake" which is located just outside of town.

Adirondack is attached to a lovely store called Carriage House which was closed this off-day afternoon. Unfortunately. What once was a bastion of knick-knacks and Americana has matured into a gallery-style boutique. It is classy and sophisticated. I left a nose smudge on its closed door.

Walking into Buffalo Plaid (named for the Woolrich wool pattern, I presume), I could see that it wasn't one of the usual stores on the street. Many of them are more pleasing to the feminine eye, this one was much more masculine. As the gentleman who was arranging items said, its merchandise is that of a more Craftsman style toward the front of the store… and more traditional toward the back. Yes, it would appear that way with its retro items that were both playful as well as substantial. What I couldn't help but think was how deliberate the staging was, that each vignette seemed carefully collected and curated. I loved it.

There were so many nice, classic items in Buffalo Plaid. None of them cried out "CABIN!" as so many of the other stores seem to stock and I appreciate that. There is still an air of whimsy without embracing the full-on kitsch.

Next, Zaiser's. This is the hit of the street. It's the belle of the ball. When I was little, it was where we'd pop in and I'd hope to get snorkels or flippers or nets or other cheap fun toys. It might've even been something of a hardware store, I can't recall. It certainly wasn't the Zaiser's that's there today. For the folks from the Cities, you could kind of compare it to a Patina or a Bibelot. Eclectic, hip, and good-looking. At the front, there are kitchen wares; both food and food implements. Interspersed are some novelty items. All are higher-end, smart goods.

Everything is appealing. There is a large toy area for kids, but I didn't go in the section or take any photos since I didn't have the kids with me. Also on the way toward the back of the store, there are shoes–both Keen active shoes and fancy dress shoes for women. The pair that Aisha picked up to admire had a price tag of $220. I decided not to photograph any of those, either, since there weren't any there big enough for the drag queens and me. So, I play favorites. Instead, I went for the striking and funny items. The ones that made me smile. Gag gifts and jewelry and canny decor, again…smart wares.

As we left Zaiser's, we didn't realize that it was 3:57…three minutes before The Chocolate Ox closed that day. We waltzed in just in time–Shakira was blaring and the place was still packed with people getting their sugar on.

I love me a candy store that looks like a candy store. Bright colors, big displays, tons of candy. A fudge counter, Jelly Belly Jelly Bean Bar, and baskets of bulk–The Chocolate Ox is a candy Mecca. And small. But, still. It's packed.

Noting the time, I marched back to the hand-dipped ice cream cone counter and tried to read the kinds of ice cream on the case through peoples' hips. Not knowing what their specialty is, I asked. And, I'll tell you, the time to ask a disinterested teenager who's apathetic on a GOOD DAY is not 2 minutes before closing. I got curt and cursory for responses. She sang along to the song when I thought she was answering

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Photos by Andy Lien

## Chocolate Ox

my question. Don't worry; I'm not mad. I found out between verses that I could split my single scoop into two flavors and I chose from the descriptions that her deadpan face told me were written on the freezer case after I figured out that maybe I shouldn't have asked her to rattle off the ingredients when they were so plainly written right there and she was so obviously singing along to a song. Whoa. Anyhow. So, I chose the White Swan with pistachio and white chocolate and the blueberry cheesecake. It was a happy ending. The ice cream was heavenly and cheap–only $3.00. And, she's a lovely girl who'll grow up to marry rich. No worries.

I found Aisha over by the chocolate. Atta girl. She ordered sea salt caramels and I got some Praline Nut fudge. The very nice salespeople behind the chocolate counter redeemed my faith in young girls in the retail industry and, really, the world. They were helpful and pleasant, despite the fact that it was after closing time on one of the most idyllic days so far that season.

Armed with ice cream and chocolates, we left Nisswa. Yes, there is so much more to it than this. But, this is what you get on a road-trip that is hand-picked by me on a random day in June.

We raced up to Pequot Lakes and chose not to stop. I was itching to hit the open road and had used up all my will to shuffle for the day. Instead, the Pandora station was playing Moby, the top on the Jeep was back, and we had some exploring to do.

And explore, we did. I drove "over" from Pequot Lakes to Breezy Point. Knowing that my favorite radio station, KLKS, comes out of Breezy Point and that many a timeshare is reserved there, I wanted to see what it was all about. We drove in and around the resort and saw what there was to see and headed back to our loop, not really over- or underwhelmed. It's one of those places that probably attracts people based on what you would do while you're there rather than what you see when you drive around the grounds. If I were a tennis player or a golfer or a boater, I'm sure I would've been much more interested. As it was, I was hungry.

So, since we were dressed casually and it was a gorgeous day, I had The Wharf in Crosslake in mind for deck dining and boat watching. My family likes to go to The Wharf if and only if there is outdoor seating available. Inside, it's really quite dark. Not dark in a bad way, but the architecture does not leave much for natural light streaming in the windows. And, in Vacationland, windows and natural lighting are must-haves. Luckily, it was an off-day and, again, there was no mob scene to be found. We had our choice of almost any table on the lower deck and were able to situate ourselves for some good bar food and boat-viewing.

Located near a bridge, the boats that pass The Wharf must slow down in the no-wake zone. And, as they do, we get to do some great people watching, not to mention see some beautiful boats. I'm not talking about the fancy, I'm-overcompensating boats… I'm talking about the restored wooden boats. The antiques. The floating, flying works of art.

We ordered some cheese curds and burgers–she got The Wharf burger and I got the Crosslake burger with onion rings. The fare was perfectly fine. The curds hit the spot and the burgers were gooey and oozey, which was exactly what they should have been.

I guess that it should've been expected that the lack of people doing things out and about would also carry over to the boat traffic, but I was worried that I wouldn't get to see any of antique beauties as we dined. But, I can gladly say I didn't go home disappointed. Just before we got our tab, a lovely wooden boat by the name of "Irish Ayes" paraded past. Ahh. A feast for the eyes that followed a feast for the belly.




## Nisswa

And we went back to the cabin, happy to enjoy our desserts of sea salt caramels and Praline Nut fudge as the sunset shone red across the lake, promising us a gorgeous day to follow. □

Continued from page 8

each other. Add that layer to the mission and stir. Perch a little paper umbrella on the rim and enjoy.

I daresay, the entire trip came off without a hitch…down to ending it with a final hour of iPod show and tell as we breezed back to St. Paul after 17.5 hours together. Amanda is a Chicago-phile with great apps on her iPhone and great excitement in her heart. Marrying that with the capital-"P" Plans made for a great combination.

We started at a Polish market, Gene's Sausage Shop, in Lincoln Square, came down Lake Shore Drive with Heidi H. snapping some great off-kilter shots out the dirty windows, drove through the museum area and back up to Millennium Park where we found ample parking. We abused The Bean for its photo opportunities and waltzed across the street to our destination.

Vivian.

And, the rest of the Cultural Center. My lands. What a treat. We were viewing art within art. Tiffany stained glass. Marble. Mosaic tiles. Dramatic sconces. And we even walked into an architectural exhibit featuring Louis Sullivan, something this lover of architecture positively trilled over. Payout.

I admit that even I felt a little apprehensive about just what the payout was going to be once we reached our destination. But, oh. I was not disappointed. Considering that many of Maier's pieces are online (but nowhere near even a fraction of the collection), I figured I've probably seen many of the photos that are in this first-exhibition-ever. I was right. Many of them were familiar…and I loved seeing them again. It's art. But, the fact that there was a small section of color prints was an unforeseen delight. I don't know about you, but black and white photographs default into an artistic category to me and my sensibilities. Color photos have to work a little harder. And the subtlety in photos that were heavy in dated colors like marigold, gold, and cyan were brilliant. You had to let the eye see the art beyond the color. It's not like photos by David LaChappelle in which the artistry jumps off the page by way of great contrast and a techno beat…these took the viewer into them and showed them around a bit. Oh, Vivian. Thank you.

Our last goal involved taking in some Chicago Dogs. While Heidi C. snapped shots of the city through the sky slider roof of the Jeep as we blasted the heat, Amanda found a drive-thru dog dealer within blocks using her apps. Portillos. This was lucky. Throw four people together who don't know each other and you can expect the best… but, if left unfed in a large metropolis, things could run amok. I wish I could've gotten photos of the bounty that was delivered through the Jeep window that dusky evening…like Santa handing over a bag of presents. We were in the same four-block area as Hard Rock Cafe, Rainforest Cafe, and the retro McDonald's, but we were bent on getting Chicago Dogs. We'd already suffered the on-foot failure of finding another place for hotdogs by way of iPhone app, but upon walking to it, it was attached to a Popeyes. No. We know the difference between a dog that you get in Chicago and a Chicago Dog. So, the five tube foods that graced the Jeep with raw onions, pickles, peppers, relish, mustard, and tomato halves, were God-sent. The rings, cheese fries, and shakes were also entirely delectable. Then, to munch from





the Portillos cornucopia as we drove up Wacker Drive along the river as we wended our way to the freeway in the setting sun (beyond the skyscrapers) was like the ending of an epic film. An epic of epic-ness.

Yes, a long drive…both there and back. But, for $34 a piece for gas and parking, we each had a pocketful of memories and experiences. And the novel claim to fame of doing a Chicago Daytrip on a day in March in 2011.

Illogical, artful, and utterly worthwhile.

And never to be replicated. It just wouldn't be possible. □





# Teachable Moments

WHILE THE Minnesota Marriage Amendment is an unfortunate and unwelcome development, it nonetheless is creating teachable moments—like the following conversation I had recently with a (non-*Lavender*) co-worker.

This person is very supportive of GLBT people and causes, so I was surprised to hear her say, "I was just walking behind a guy in the skyway, and—why do some gay guys behave like that?" Like what, I asked. "Well, he was swinging his hips and flipping his wrists—you know what I mean. There are some gay men who act like that, and then there are the rest of you, who just act normal."

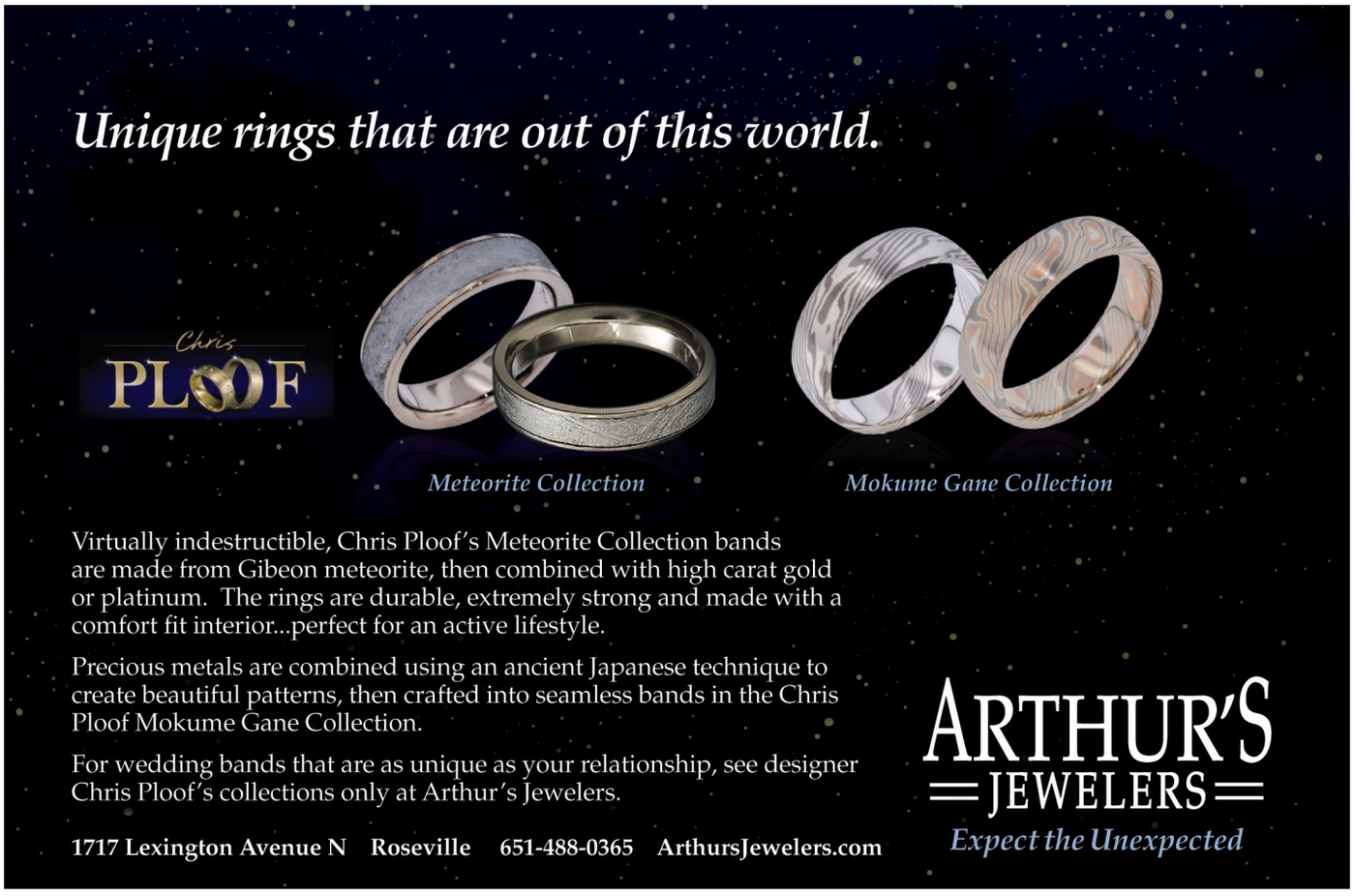
I explained that there might be many reasons why someone would act "like that": Maybe that's just the way he is. Or he might have been "camping it up" either for fun (perhaps inappropriate in public) or to deliberately upset onlookers (generally not appropriate in public—you won't get people to sympathize with your cause by antagonizing them). Or he might have been exhibiting learned behavior—when he was young he was told this was the way gay people acted. (All these same possibilities apply also to masculine women.)

Or he might not have been gay. Many effeminate heterosexual men and boys are assumed to be gay and are even sometimes bullied as a result. Too often people assume that one's gender presentation (masculine women, effeminate men) is connected to one's preference (lesbian or gay) when, in fact, they're not always connected.

I also explained that, in my experience, younger people tend to make these assumptions less often than older people, and younger people also grant themselves and others both more freedom and more fluidity in who they love and how they present their gender image to the world.

I finished by explaining that I hope to see a society that lets everyone be who they are and express themselves authentically, as long as they are being civil and appropriate. An opposite-sex couple flaunting their heterosexuality in the skyway would not be appropriate public behavior, either. But there's a difference between making out in public and simply holding hands.

I felt I had accomplished something when her response was, "Well, thank you for explaining. Now I'm going to go home and tell all this to my husband—because that guy in the skyway really would have bothered him!" □

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## Catholic Nuns Group "Stunned" By Vatican Slap

Reuters reports that a prominent U.S. Catholic nuns' group said on Thursday it was "stunned" that the Vatican reprimanded it for spending too much time on poverty and social justice concerns and not enough on abortion and gay marriage. The Vatican said the Leadership Conference of Women Religious had failed to make the "Biblical view of family life and human sexuality" a central plank in its agenda.

## 1-USA

**Gay Romney Aide Deletes Tweets Bashing Prominent Females**
Huffington Post reports that Mitt Romney's decision to pick openly gay Richard Grenell as his foreign policy spokesperson has not only caused trouble with social conservatives, but also with women. Grenell's has reportedly removed 800 Tweets recently. His feed was ride with jokes and snide remarks about female political figures like Michelle Obama, Hillary Clinton, and Callista Gingrich. For example, Grenell tweeted: "Hillary is starting to look like Madeleine Albright," "Callista stands there like she is wife #1," or Michele Obama was "sweating on the East Room carpet" after working out. Grenell has apologized for his remarks.

**Gay-Rights Advocates Meet With LDS Officials**
The Salt Lake Tribune reports that gay group Soulforce's 2012 Equality Ride met with Mormon church Latter Day Saints officials on Monday in Salt Lake City to draw attention to policies perceived as harmful to the GLBT community. The gay group brought up four specific requests for the LDS Church: to cut all ties with and denounce a group treating gays with "reparative" therapy; to stop funding groups that are fighting civil marriage equality across the country; to encourage LDS Business College to bring its policies on homosexuality in line with current Mormon teachings; and to add sexual orientation and gender identity to the faith's policies for church employees. Co-director of Equality Ride Jason Conner qualified the meeting as "overall positive."

**Missouri 'Don't Say Gay' Bill: GOP Sponsors Wary Of "Homosexual Agenda"**
Huffington Post reports that a group of twenty Republican representatives in Missouri introduced the so-called "don't say gay" bill last week to ban the teaching of sexual orientation in public schools as a way to prevent students from being exposed to the "homosexual agenda." House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Andrew Koenig said: "When it comes to sexual orientation, that is a discussion that should be left for the most part up to the parents. I know there are a lot of parents that do not want the homosexual agenda taught in the schools." When questioned about what he called a "homosexual agenda" being taught in the schools, Koenig could not think of an example.

**Newt Gingrich Encourages Anti-Gay Ballot Measure**
Huffington Post reports that Republican presidential candidate Newt Gingrich released a video saying that marriage is under attack, and encouraging North Carolina voters to go to the polls on May 8 and pass Amendment 1, an initiative that would constitutionally ban gay marriage. The ballot will read: "Constitutional amendment to provide that marriage between one man and one woman is the only domestic legal union that shall be valid or recognized in this State." On the same day, state residents will choose a Republican presidential candidate.

**Anti-Gay Group Accuses IRS of Leaking Romney Donation Details**
Fox News reports that anti-gay marriage group National Organization for Marriage is accusing the Internal Revenue Service of leaking private tax files that listed Mitt Romney as a contributor. The anti-gay marriage group is calling for an IRS investigation and has fired off a warning letter to the Human Rights Campaign to take down the published documents. The National Organization for Marriage claims somebody within the IRS fed the Human Rights Campaign the documents listing 2008 contributors. On the list was a $10,000 donation from Romney's political action committee. While the National Organization for Marriage says the leak was illegal, the HRC says the anti-LGBT group is actually "embarrassed its true agenda is out in the open."

**It's Time to Revise The Ban On Gay Men's Blood Donations**
The American Council on Science and Health reports that any man who has ever had sex with another man is barred from donating blood for life even though HIV tests can now detect the virus as soon as 12 days post-infection. The FDA enacted the lifetime deferral nearly thirty years ago when AIDS was considered an epidemic and tests could not ensure that donated blood was virus-free. Many question the ban on gay men's blood donations considering the severity of blood shortages and the vastly improved accuracy of current HIV tests. Dr. Josh Bloom says "It makes no sense that men who have sex with men are singled out for lifetime exclusion from blood donation, while men known to engage in risky behaviors, such as unprotected sex with prostitutes, are not."

**Gays With Many Partners Should Take Daily Pill to Ward Off HIV**
The New York Daily News reports that a cost-benefit analysis showed that gay men who have at least five sexual partners per year are part of a high-risk group that could benefit from a daily pill to ward off HIV. As many as 63,000 infections could be avoided if 20% of the gays took the Truvada pill daily. Past research found using the pill for preventive purposes would not make financial sense if taken for life. New data may indicate a 20-year period of pill-taking would be cost-effective. Some people with HIV combine Truvada as a treatment with other anti-retroviral drugs.

**Gay Marriage Foes Assume Own Marriages Are Stable**
Huffington Post reports on a new study suggesting that no opponents of gay marriage really thinks their own heterosexual relationships are threatened. Opponents rather believe that other people's marriages are at risk. The study is an example of the "third-person perception," a psychological bias in which people are convinced that others are more influenced by outside sources than they are themselves. People who strongly regard authority and tradition were the most likely to demonstrate this third-person effect when discussing gay marriage. Study researcher and psychologist Matthew Winslow said: "Most of the people who were really vehemently against gay marriage were not likely to say they were worried about their own marriages, but they talked about how if we allowed gay marriage it was going to be bad for society in general. If you believe you are not going to be affected by [same-sex marriage], just recognize that probably other people believe the same way, so the good news is that probably people aren't going to be affected by it that much."

## 2-ISRAEL

**Israel's Conservative Movement OKs Gay and Lesbian Rabbis**
The Washington Post reports that the Israeli branch of Conservative Judaism announced in a landmark decision that its rabbinical school will start enrolling gay and lesbian students for ordination in September. Rabbi Andy Sacks in Israel welcomed the policy change as "a victory for all who understand that Judaism holds respect for human beings as a supreme value. All people were created in the image of the divine. Morality and Jewish law do coexist as long as those who practice traditional Judaism understand this."

# Julie Peck

JULIE PECK, a devoted mother of three and owner of Lucy Coffee Café in St. Paul discusses how she works to promote a welcoming environment both in her personal life and in her business – and why business owners should stand up and vote NO on the anti-marriage amendment in November.



Photo by Sophia Hantzes

**Lavender Magazine:** Julie, as a straight ally, what was your journey like to become a supporter of equality for all – regardless of sexual orientation?

**Julie Peck:** I came from a relatively conservative family growing up, but I think I have always been aware and supportive of people who are seemingly "different." Growing up, I always tried to do what I could to help others and to respect everyone – because everyone deserves that. But I don't think it was until I had children that I really became passionate about equality for all – it was then that I fully realized that people who are supposedly "different" aren't really so different, after all. We all want the same things and the same opportunities for happiness in our lives.

**LM:** What about being a mother made you want to fight for equality?

**JP:** As a mother of three boys; two deaf and one hearing, I knew from early on that their lives were going to be different from the societal norm. Here I was, a hearing parent with two children who would speak a different language and belong to a different culture than what I had ever known. I knew that they would be treated differently because of it, and this inspired me to work with the deaf community and raise my boys with sign language. It was important to me that they become immersed in the deaf community from an early age.

**LM:** How has your work with your sons and the deaf community shaped your opinion of LGBT rights and specifically marriage?

**JP:** As a mother, you want what is best for your children and you never want them to be treated differently simply because of who they are. Unfortunately, that is not always the case and people still treat others differently. I have seen this with deaf and gay people alike and I believe everyone should be respected – it is not our place to judge those who are seemingly different than us, because everyone wants the same things – like love, freedom and family. That is why voting no on this amendment is so important to me, because hearing, deaf, gay, straight, and everyone else deserves the right to love who they love. That's how I raised my children, and its how I run my business.

**LM:** As a business owner, what do you do to promote equality within your business and among your staff?

**JP:** When hiring an employee, I don't look at things like gay or straight, deaf or hearing – instead I look at the person and their qualifications. I currently employ both deaf and hearing employees who both do a fantastic job for me and I have been pleased with all my employees. As a business owner, you need to hire the best employees regardless of their differences. A great employee is a great employee regardless of sexual orientation.

**LM:** From your perspective, what is the most important thing that gay and lesbians can do to help employers promote equality in the workplace?

**JP:** The biggest thing that I can say is that some people may be unaware of the struggles that gay people go through on a daily basis and how the running of a business affects them. For instance, I wasn't aware of how gay people felt about this amendment until a gay person talked to me about it, and explained how they felt and what it was like to be gay in a state that is considering an amendment that would permanently deny them the basic freedom to marry. For this reason, I would say just talking with your employer and expressing how you feel and why treating all employees the same is so important. This is a great way to start educating and also helping them understand and shape their business to be more supportive and equal.

**LM:** So Julie, what advice would you give to employers who want to promote equality in their office?

**JP:** Just be open and hire your employees based on their individual qualifications and merit. Also, demonstrate that you are committed to a welcoming workplace – in this case, letting your employees know that your business is opposed to the anti-marriage amendment. That is one way of telling your employees you value all of them, and that you won't support amending our constitution to limit their basic freedoms. Love is love, and the bottom line is that absolutely no one should be permanently excluded from making a lifetime commitment to the person they love through marriage. □

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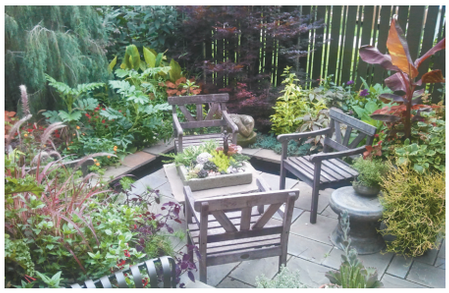
# I Did It My Way! The Evolution of My Garden

WHEN I moved into my house 16 years ago, I found myself in a quandary. Having a passion for plant diversity and harmonious garden combinations, I felt a little constricted by the amount of space available to garden. My humble 40×80' lot was already monopolized by the 1889 Victorian I now call home, with a small front yard, back yard and narrow side yard filling what was left. I knew I would have to make the most of every square inch of space. There would be no room for turfgrass since my list of "must haves" consumed several pages of notebook with mental notes adding to the list.

The front would be a public space with bold plantings to be viewed from the street and sidewalk. This garden includes a slightly mounded boulevard garden extending the small front yard to the street, creating a sense of depth, but also more space to garden. Likewise, container gardens create additional planting opportunities. More importantly, my container groupings bridge the gap between home and garden by spilling out onto the front porch and into the garden.

The backyard would become a private oasis—a retreat from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. I designed and built an island-like rectangular stone patio surrounded by a narrow "moat" of water – a perfect residence for my Japanese Koi and a way to include water into an already full garden. Carefully selected pottery and garden art create focal areas and interest, where needed, throughout the garden. And of course, more captivating container combinations, that like the garden, evolve through the seasons.

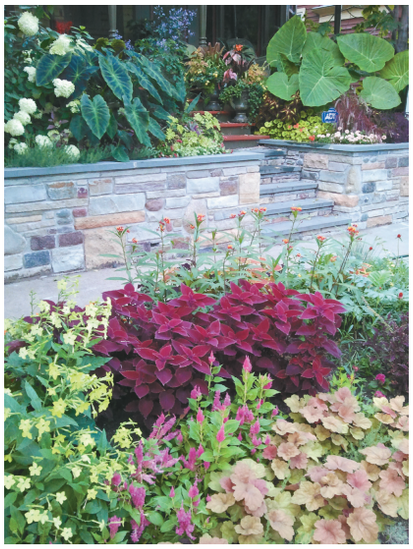
The side garden was more challenging. I wanted this garden to be an experience, not just an expressway between the front and the back. The space was narrow. The light was bright. The destinations were clearly defined. My job was to psychologically broaden the space, make the best use of the sunlight, and make the space into a destination that would tempt guests to linger as they passed from the public to the private areas of my garden. Although I needed to enclose the space, I couldn't bear the idea of a tall solid privacy fence. It would make the already narrow space claustrophobic, and would shade the garden from the precious southern sun. Hedging material would take up too much real estate. I opted for a decorative period style cast iron and wood fence to border the side garden connecting to a taller wooden privacy fence which surrounded the private back garden. It was fitting to the architecture of the house and the visual weight of the fence was enough to define the space without caging it from the outside. I chose an irregular stone path to lead visitors through the garden. Although a straight walk, the irregular stepping stones slow traffic and invite one to experience every step of the way. A variety of repeating groundcovers organically soften the hard edge of the stone, yet are durable enough to handle the occasional trounce of a foot.





Photos courtesy of Scott Endres

Contrasting colors, textures, and forms create each combination, which leads to the next combination. Contrast is the easiest way to produce effective plant combinations—a bold textured leaf next to a smaller one; a mounding form contrasting with a spiky upright plant; or, by partnering cool and hot colors (opposites on the color wheel). Repetition of color, forms, or in some cases, plant varieties, tie it all together, connecting front and back, left and right, while directing the viewer's eye through the garden. This repetition creates a consistent harmony as one's eye picks up familiar notes along the



way (dark foliage, bright foliage, upright forms). In my garden, flowers play second fiddle to the bold characteristics and utter beauty achieved with the use of foliage first. Hardy herbaceous and woody plants harmoniously coexist with non-hardy tropicals, annuals and succulents. This boldness gives scale and meaning to the garden as it relates to my two story home. I like lots of plants, but the ones chosen for my garden are the ones that work to earn their keep and serve a purpose in the overall sense of design I like to maintain. Common plants can be appreciated in someone else's garden, leaving the stars to shine in all parts of my limited space. Plants that cannot sing for their supper are moved elsewhere or take a trip to the compost pile where they will eventually contribute something worthwhile back to the garden. This allows for an ever-changing pallet of plants and endless plant combinations to feed my creative energy and keep things fresh and new.

In my garden, every season brings something new – and more time to dream, experiment, and implement my own ideas. A garden is never finished, always evolving, just like the person who tends it. It is our job to make the most of the gardens we tend along with the lives we live, reaping the rewards the garden offers and the lessons learned along the way. □

*Scott Endres is co-owner of Tangletown Gardes and Tangletown's Wise Acre Eatery on 54th and Nicollet in South Minneapolis. He gardens in Minneapolis' twin city, Saint Paul.*


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RIDE REVIEW | Randy Stern

# Acura TL

DO YOU still remember the best automobile you ever owned?

I remember the day I took delivery of a 1991 Acura Integra RS coupe. It was dusk on a Thursday in November of 1990. I arrived with a cashier's check at Marin Acura in Corte Madera, California ready to take my brand new baby home. The vehicle in question was just finished with detailing after the air conditioning unit was installed into my Concord Blue Metallic hatchback.

The car was not equipped with all the luxuries we have come to expect from an Acura today. But, I did not care. I wanted something pure, with fine handling and enough agility to possibly take it to a track – namely Sears Point (now called Infineon). All I needed to add to my new Integra was an audio system that matched my taste. I took it across the highway to an electronics retailer for the aftermarket installation. The rest is history.

The experience lasted two-and-a-half years. I miss it a lot – even today. There are plenty of regrets – I never took it on a track, ever. The Integra did make it to my brother's wedding a month after I took delivery of it. Also, it went on a few dates with my first boyfriend, and delivered me to my undergraduate commencement at California State University, East Bay in June of 1993.

There is a void that has lasted 19 years since I parted ways with my Integra. Is there a way to close this gap so I could get over my lament over my prized Concord Blue Metallic 1991 Acura Integra RS coupe? Is there something wearing the dual caliper badge of Acura that is worthy of the spirit of my old car?

Perhaps I need to find its spiritual successor. Maybe there is some descendant out there with the spirit and the magic of my old hatchback coupe. Sadly, Acura does not sell a three-door hatchback coupe anymore. Not since they cancelled the RSX in 2006. The lowest model in their lineup is the re-branded version of the Honda Accord Euro – the smaller version of the Accord sold in various parts of this planet – called the TSX. This coming fall, a new smaller Acura will debut in the U.S. – the ILX.

Still, the quandary persists. Maybe the approach to find the right Acura should take into consideration an old Integra owner who has grown up, but remains loyal to the brand. It would have to be the right vehicle for an owner whose priorities have changed along with their economic status and social standing in the community. Yet, there is still the want to quench the right foot's need for hitting the limiter – to simply feel what Acura can still do to an enthusiast.



Photos by Randy Stern

Perhaps this Acura TL would do the trick.

This big, bold, and beautiful sedan came from a lineage that began with the groundbreaking Acura Legend of 26 years ago. When Honda's new luxury sedan arrived at select showrooms across the U.S., it broke new ground for Japanese automakers. The evolution of the species spawned various Acura sedans – both developed in Japan and in the U.S. – designed to woo luxury car consumers to their technologically advanced vehicles with rather edgy designs.

There are plenty of luxury car buyers that would dismiss a vehicle sporting such an edgy design with a plethora of advanced technology on board. The TL may surprise you.

The latest TL went through some nips and tucks to tone down some details that provoked many critiques of Acura's design philosophy. For example, the satin-chrome "shield" up front was a point of contention for luxury car purists and the automotive media alike. The shield has been toned down and given a better finish to compliment an even more handsome and athletic silhouette. It also helps to have a fine hue to go along with this design, since the Mayan Bronze color on the tester was absolutely dazzling.

In this SH-AWD (Super Handling All-Wheel Drive) model, a set of 19-inch wheels created an appropriate finish to the overall exterior design. From one angle, it is a luxury mid-size sedan; from another, it is an aggressive sports sedan. The TL is an exacting combination of both.

Step inside, and the TL truly welcomes you. The first whiff of the leather seats lures you in. Once you comprehend the sea of but-

tons from the steering wheel and on the center stack, you are entertained with plenty of soft touch materials and an even softer hide in umber. The seats are on the firm side, but they are big with the right amount of bolstering to keep you in place through the curves. There is plenty of room for four adults inside, along with their luggage for an extended weekend.

Acura and Honda made sure that the TL is truly a driver's car. The dials and steering wheel are the right size. Controls are of the right size and touch – mostly within reach on and around the steering wheel. A driver can insert the remote key fob next to the red ignition button, or you can leave the fob in your pocket until it's battery runs low. You also get blind spot monitoring to rein you in sudden lane changes without looking.

The shifter for the six-speed automatic gearbox on the center console reminds you of a short-throw manual. There are paddle shifters on the steering wheel, which only work if you out the shifter into Sport mode for better control of the gear changes. However, they are attached to the back of the wheel rather than the column. If I wanted to use the "flappy paddles," my preference would be for them to be stationery with the column for better steering-to-shift control.

This TL came with the Advance package – a suite of technological goodies designed for the geek in all of us. It starts with a huge LCD screen that can be switched from the navigation system to a large, easy-to-comprehend audio system readout. A smaller screen is below for redundant messages from the audio system, along with climate control settings. Sound is channeled through Acura's ELS/Surround system's 10 speakers from the output of a 440-watt amplifier. There are plenty of audio options to choose from, including a 15GB hard drive that could hold 3,600 of your favorite songs, or the ability to grab your song files from your Bluetooth-enabled phone. There's more to this audio system, but all it takes is one listen. It is indeed a wonderful noise.

Normally, TL owners would settle for just a 280 horsepower, 3.5litre dual overhead camshaft V6 with four-valves-per cylinder and so forth. But, you would have to settle for front-wheel drive with that engine. Since this tester came with Acura's SH-AWD, it came with 305 horsepower of V6 goodness, displacing at 3.7litres. Frankly, the latter engine is absolutely perfect for the TL.

With the 3.7litre V6, you get a great balance of quiet operation and refined anger. Spool up the throttle and find yourself delighted by the response. As mentioned before, a six-speed automatic is mated between this engine and the SH-AWD system.

Having driven a few all-wheel drive systems on both sedans and SUV/crossovers, I never had a chance to discover what one feels like in a luxury sedan when it is tuned for traction and handling. We can talk about Audi's Quattro system, BMW's xDrive, Mercedes-Benz's 4Matic and so forth, but Acura's SH-AWD system is worth considering. Through a challenging rainfall and typical Twin Cities freeway traffic, the TL's SH-AWD simply worked by putting power and grip down to all wheels even during evasive maneuvers. This system works the corners extraordinarily well – all four wheels gripping without hesitation or complaint. The Goodyear Eagle RS-A tires added more glue for the SH-AWD to work extraordinarily well.

In short, this is one heck of an all-wheel drive system. On dry roads, the Acura provides fantastic handling with near perfect body control on banks and curves. The TL is simply calm and confident when getting out of the most precarious situations. With everything you touch, the TL responds immediately. The ride is solid and smooth, but just a tad on the firm side. That firmness comes into play with road imperfections, yet the suspension dampers do a fine job balancing them out. Steering is sharp for a big sedan with fantastic road feel and feedback. As far as stopping power, it is quite good in both normal and panic braking.

As expected, the TL is a bit on the thirsty side. Overall fuel consumption came to 20.6 MPG. Considering all the factors involved – weight, performance and the AWD system – that number is a very realistic view of what to expect from a luxury sport sedan such as the TL.

The price of admission is surprisingly competitive. While it may not be seen as a direct competitor to BMW's 5-Series, Audi's A6 and the Mercedes-Benz E-Class, the Ohio-built TL starts out at just south of $37,000. My tester, with the SH-AWD and Advance package came in just under $46,000. It is not exactly a bargain, but consider that you do get a lot for the sticker price – performance included.

When luxury car buyers discuss brands, listen very carefully. There are a significant number of them that are loyal to their brands. Others hope to find something that fits their lifestyle regardless of which brand they choose. Acura provides buyers a choice of luxury vehicles with edgy styling, high levels of technology, and performance.

The TL is no exception. As a big sedan, you get the comfort required in this class of car along with the technology and performance Acura is known for. Even if you are married to a specific luxury brand outside of Acura, give the TL a chance. You may find it very uncommon and satisfying – just like my old 1991 Integra.

As for my quest to come full circle with my 19-year gap with Acura? Mission accomplished. □




Photo by Randy Stern





# Being Brave

I CONFESS. Sometimes, I get afraid. Like coward afraid.

Example: two years ago, as I was moving to Minneapolis, I obtained health insurance with Big Insurance Company. When I filled out the health insurance application, I didn't disclose that I was transgender—they didn't ask and I didn't volunteer. I left the "male or female" box unchecked. Still, they issued an insurance card and I paid several months' premiums.

All went well until I received a notice terminating my health insurance. The reason? You guessed it—recent medical records discussed that I am transgender. Big Insurance thought I should have disclosed that in my application—which they then would have automatically rejected.

I appealed the termination. Eventually, I ended up in a fancy conference room with ten or so Big Insurance representatives. "You're discriminating against me," I said. "This is wrong."

A couple months later, Big Insurance wrote again. They weren't going to change their collective mind. I was out of luck.

At that point, I had to make a decision. I could have sued Big Insurance or I could have simply bought more expensive insurance through a high risk pool. For a variety of reasons, I chose option 2. I'll admit it: one reason was fear—I was all alone in a new city; I feared my medical and emotional history would spill out in a courtroom of strangers; and I feared losing.

In other words, I chickened out from a big fight. I'm not proud and hope that in the two years since, I've become a bit braver. I can only hope.

Recently, another transgender faced a very similar situation. This time, someone had real guts and things turned out way differently.

Christine Radtke was born a biological male in 1965. By 2003, she had transitioned to female via sex-reassignment surgery. She met a man, Calvin, they fell in love, and in 2005, they married in a small civil ceremony in Red Wing. Calvin worked for UPS, and had Christine added to his medical insurance, which was administered by a union-related trust fund, something which the court decision refers to as "the Fund."

Fast forward to early 2010. After hearing a rumor that Christine and Calvin weren't actually married, the Fund hired an attorney to investigate. Quickly, the attorney determined that Christine had been born male. The Fund then terminated Christine's insurance asserting that under Minnesota law—which as we all know, doesn't allow same sex marriage—the Radtkes didn't have a valid marriage.

At that point, Christine could have done what I did—she could have let it drop and found coverage through the higher market. But Christine wasn't like Ellie Krug—Christine bravely fought back. She hired lawyers and sued in federal court. The Fund then countersued, asserting that Christine now owed $80,410.79 for medical benefits the Fund had previously paid out.

Talk about pressure. And risk. Despite this, Christine persevered.

Much of the Court's April 2, 2012, decision—37 pages long— is devoted to the question of whether Christine could actually be considered "female" even after reassignment surgery. The Fund asserted that notwithstanding Christine's surgery (and emotional makeup), she was still male, making her marriage to Calvin a sham. Thus, Calvin had no right to dependent spouse medical coverage for Christine.

Chief Federal Judge Michael Davis didn't buy this argument. Almost any transgender would find his words lyrical, if not magical:

An individual's sex includes many components, including chromosomal, anatomical, hormonal, and reproductive elements, some of which could be ambiguous or in conflict within an individual. The assigned sex of an individual at birth is based solely on observation of anatomy at birth, which itself may change when the individual reaches puberty. Here, Ms. Radtke is anatomically and hormonally female. It would be wholly inappropriate for this Court to invent a narrow federal definition of "sex" based on the sex assigned at birth…"

In what constitutes a groundbreaking decision—at least for Minnesota—Judge Davis ruled that Christine had a right to marry Calvin. According to the judge, "The Fund's interpretation of Minnesota law was unreasonable and wrong."

I started to cry when I read the court decision. For transgenders everywhere, the ruling was one more step, another foot or two, toward normal. More importantly, it affirmed the value of bravery. Without Christine courageously taking a stand—a responsibility which I shirked—we wouldn't have this crucial precedent. □

To Christine Alisen Radtke—and her husband and lawyers—I say, Congratulations! May all of us learn from your example.

Feel free to contact Ellen at ellenkrug75@gmail.com.

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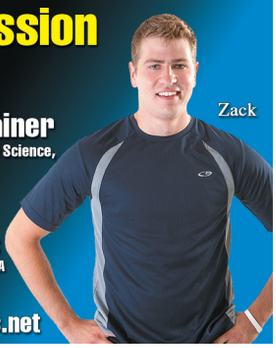


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# My Annulment

YESTERDAY, I received an interesting message on my office voicemail. "Miss Parello, I am calling from the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago. Please return my call immediately."

At first, I thought it might be my old friend Satan trying to play a trick on me. Things have been a bit dull for him since Richard Nixon's death, so he tends to get into a bit of mischief. Why not have Jennifer crank call the Archdiocese for a giggle?

But when I called the number, I was stunned to discover that the Archdiocese really did want to talk to me.

"Oh, yes," the lady said, after identifying herself as the Cardinal's secretary. "It's about your annulment."

Ahh, yes, my annulment! I suppose, dear readers, I owe you a bit of a back-story on this one.

When I was in my 20s, I was young, stupid, and a bit cruel. I married a very nice boy and, within two years of great confusion on both our parts, I divorced him for reasons that should come as no surprise to any of you.

About a year after our divorce, his fiancée (he wasted no time in replacing me with a safer model, who also happened to have my same first name, which I'm sure made things much less complicated in the boudoir, plus he didn't have to return any of the monogrammed stuff we got as wedding gifts) called me and asked if I'd have any issue with an annulment.

"For who?" I asked, genuinely confused, first by getting a call from a strange woman who claimed to be my ex-husband's fiancée and second by the annulment business. In spite of the hard vowel as the end of my name, I was raised Lutheran and not Catholic. As was my ex-husband. And we married in a Presbyterian Church. I can't remember why….because it was a pretty church, I think.

She wasn't inclined to give me an explanation on why two non-Catholics needed to get annulled, and I really didn't give a damn, so I said, "Sure. Annul us."

That was 15 years ago, and I had forgotten all about the annulment, and my marriage for that matter, until I received an email from my ex-husband about a year ago. "Remember the annulment?" he asked. "Well, we're ready to through with it." He asked me a few religion-related questions that his wife had asked me 15 years before, and I responded with a few polite inquires about his family, and that was the end of it.

Or so I thought. Then I got the call from the Archdiocese. Apparently they had been trying to contact me for over a year but had the wrong address. And the annulment was in limbo because I hadn't signed off on it. The secretary told me all I had to do was give her the verbal OK and the annulment would sail to the final step, which I suspect is when my ex-husband will be required to make a very large donation to the Cardinal's diamond ring fund.

"When it's final, we'll send you a copy so if you want to marry in the Catholic Church you can do so because you're annulled."

I laughed and told her I wouldn't be needing the document. And, surprisingly, she joined in the laughter.

"Oh, I know you're Protestant, but I'm required to tell you that. I'm not trying to convert you."

"Well, actually, I'm involved with a Catholic," I said, referring to my lapsed Catholic girlfriend. "So, does this mean my girlfriend and I will be able to marry in the Catholic Church?"

Silence on the other end. Then, "I'm sorry, I really must go now."

I've gotten older and smarter, but I'm still kind of cruel. □

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# MS. BEHAVIOR™ | Meryl Cohn

**Dear Ms. Behavior:**

I consider myself a straight male. However, I often fantasize about having oral sex with another man. Does that mean I am bi or gay? I know swallowing is risky, but I really would like to experience that too, if I could find an honest male to try it on, who is under 38 years old. Now on the other hand, I love women and want to get married some day. I do not like to cuddle with a man or kiss a man; in fact, I would find it gross. Can you give me some advice?

**-LOVE TO SWALLOW**

**Dear Love to Swallow:**

What's "straight" about wanting sex with men and cuddling and marriage with women? You specify the under-38 age range of the men you'd like to blow, and the only other characteristic you specify is honesty. Ms. Behavior presumes that by "honest," you mean about his HIV status. But will you be honest with the woman you someday hope to marry when you go out on your sucking and swallowing expeditions? Will you go down on her, too? The fact that you find the idea of cuddling or kissing a man "gross" makes you sound like you might suffer from a touch of homophobia. Perhaps therapy would help you to sort out your feelings, so that perhaps someday the person you want to blow is the same one you want to kiss, and vice versa.

**Dear Ms. Behavior:**

Can a lesbian and a bisexual woman be friends after having a passionate relationship? I've decided to be friends with this bisexual woman until she can figure out what she wants. She has children and I feel that she is stuck in the fantasy of her children having a father figure even if her own needs are not fully being met. So to play it safe with my own heart, being friends with her and just loving her at a distance is all I can do for now. Yes, I am hoping she will rediscover her true feelings for me, but until then, I've decided on no intimacy. What do you think? Am I wasting away as my heart is frozen in time?

**-WASTING AWAY**

**Dear Wasting Away:**

Your signature suggests that you've answered your own question: It doesn't sound like you have enough distance from your bisexual "friend" to protect your heart.

Get out of your friend's head. Don't worry about what fantasy she's stuck in, and don't wait for her to figure out what she wants. That might take a long time, particularly if you're hanging out in the background, hoping she'll rediscover her feelings for you. Your physical presence won't make her more likely to realize that she wants you. And just resisting the temptation to have sex with one another is probably not enough of a change to create the distance that you both need now.

Besides, if your heart is "frozen in time" it won't necessarily be available for the big thaw if a real and wonderful lesbian happens to shows up, ready for a relationship with you. □

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# On Aging

A MAN sits in his living room. He's in his mid-50s. Handsome. Smartly dressed. He's normally jovial. Gregarious, even. He is known for his kindness and his sense of humor. But today he's darker. His face is flush with too much alcohol. His hand trembles when he reaches for his vodka-soda.

His home is impressive: palatial, airy, decorated with pricey art and sleek furniture. He loves white decor. There's white everywhere. It makes me nervous to eat or drink anything here. I hesitate to sit on his sofa, afraid I'll stain it with my inferior success.

We're sitting side-by-side, hunched over a glass coffee table, looking at a photo album–a real-life, leather and adhesive paper, photo album. I'm 21 years old at the time, and I'm looking at pictures of him when he was my age–pictures depicting him surrounded by gorgeous, half-naked young men.

"This is George," he says of a cute blonde in one picture. "We used to get into so much trouble together." He forces a laugh, and it seems like he's about to cry, as if it's painful to look at the picture.

He frequently chats about his youth in my company, and references the many pictures he's collected over the years–evidence of his debauched and glamorous twenties. He promised to show them to me one day, and here we are. But sitting at his side, watching him choke up on seeing his former life, makes me regret my visit. I feel bad for making him relive these memories, but I don't understand why they are painful. These are pictures full of happiness. Shouldn't he treasure these?

"You don't have to show these to me," I say softly.

He fights back his tears. "No, no," he clears his throat. "It's just hard for me to see these again…" He looks at me and there is a long silence. And then he breaks down. "I'm not that boy anymore," he says abruptly. Tears fill his eyes and stream down his face. He sobs uncontrollably. "This isn't me anymore."

I embrace him, and the white sofa and its worries melt away…

That was four year ago. I'm 25 now. I'll be 26 this year. I'm by no means an authority on aging, but I've experienced firsthand what it does–what it means.

When I was 19 years old, my ex, with whom I was madly in love, told me, "Justin, when you turn 20, I won't like the idea of you anymore."

His revelation was earth-shattering. I was everything I thought he wanted me to be. I kept my body the way he wanted it. I dressed and smelled exactly as he instructed. But I couldn't control my age.

His words still haunt me. I'm self-conscious of my age–even in my mid-twenties–not because I think I'm "old," but because maybe I'm afraid the people who I want to care about me will think that way. Irrational? Of course.

What does this say about us? When we step back and remember our lives, do we remember our youth with nostalgia or longing? Are we jealous of who we were?

Many people appreciate where their lives have taken them. They look to their youth with great fondness and a "I enjoyed it while it lasted, but boy did I have a lot to learn" perspective. And there are those who know it's silly to try to recapture what once was (and what, quite frankly, looks better only in retrospect), but who still try.

It brings us to the unintended point my friend made four years ago, as he sat amongst the evidence of his professional success with a friend who didn't care about his age. He said to me, "This isn't me anymore." And it wasn't. He was a million times wiser than the boy we saw in his photo album. He'd experienced a thousand more memories and a hundred more heartbreaks. He was known now not for his partying or his age, but for his kindness and his sense of humor.

He was a few years older and a million times better. □

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